COMIC BOOKS
COMICS FEATURE
Number 52
February 1987
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Exclusive:
Behind-The-Scenes
with...
G.I. JOE
A REAL AMERICAN HERO
THE FAMILY OF THE FUTURE IS BACK
THE JETSONS
A COMPLETE HERO HISTORY
THE SUB-MARINER
WHERE DO THEY COME FROM?
COMIC BOOK PRICES
A TALK WITH THE CREATORS OF
TEENAGE MUTANT TURTLES
THE GOLDEN SUMMER OF
DC COMICS
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HAPPY HAL'S HOWLINGS

I'm going to tell you a couple of stories. One is about a man that failed, and succeeded gloriously, and the other is about a man that may succeed, but fail badly.

Steve Schanes is the head man at Blackthorne Publishing. I have spoken to him many times and he has very good taste. He knows just which artists and writers are truly worth the paper that they are published on and has produced both portfolios and books of the finest work. The books that he has published reproducing the best comic strip work of the past are well worth your time and money. You simply shouldn't be without them if you have any aspirations at all of building a quality collection of comic art material. While the original work was done for comic strip format, here they are collected into books and tell entire stories. It becomes very clear how similar comic strip and comic book storytelling really is. And some of the greatest comic storytelling of all time appears in these collections.

Some of the very best include tales of Prince Valiant, Tales of the Green Berets, Star Hawks, Tarzan, Dick Tracy, Annie, Kerry Drake...and too many more to even list here. The talents involved in the works include such luminaries as Burne Hogarth, Joe Kubert & Robin Moore, Ron Goulart & Gil Kane, Leonard Starr Alfred Andriola, Chester Gould...well, you get the idea. The simple truth is that this is very lovely stuff. Books that you simply shouldn't be without!

Take Ol' Happy Hal's advice and contact him immediately to find out how much these'll cost you by mail or rush down to your closest specialty shop that carries them and pick up a whole bunch. And if they don't carry them, yell until they change their minds!

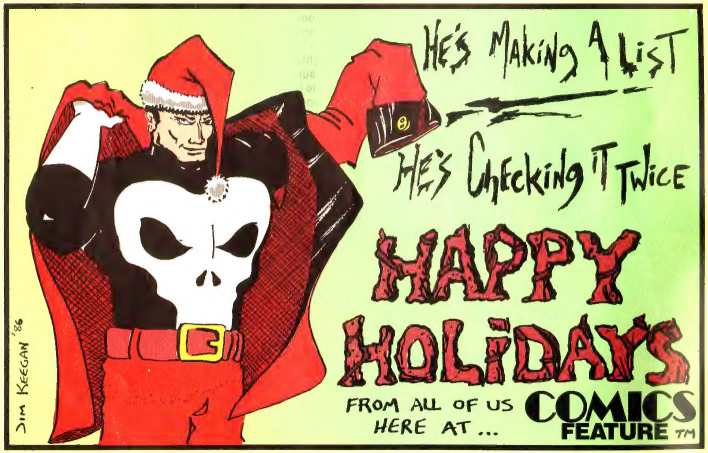
Yes, I know that this is an unabashed plug but rest assured that I am not being paid anything by the company, they do not advertise with us and I have absolutely no connection with the firm. I just know something good when I see it! At some point I plan to take a couple of pages of the magazine to let you know about the books in greater detail than space allows here.

I must admit that I did receive one payment. Steve was good enough to send me a whole batch of his books to review and that's why I'm practically gurgling with happiness at the moment.

Contact: Blackthorne Publishing, Inc., 786 Blackthorne Ave., El Cajon, CA, 92020.

One last word of caution. Do not confuse the original material books that this company publishes with these fine reprints. For the life of me I fail to understand how Steve can publish a lot of these books, he should know better!

CONTD ON PAG 17



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FEATURES

GI JOE
A Real American Hero

The best-selling comic book in America today is **G.I. Joe.** For over two decades superheroes dominated the comic book world while war, mystery, romance, humor and crime tales disappeared into the misty past. A comic book about American fighting men, special forces or not, would seem to be a sure prescription for sales disaster. But just the opposite has happened and this new team of specialized modern warriors has swept the toy, animation and comic book worlds. Yet no one has talked to the artists and writers to learn how the stories are created, how characters are developed and just what makes the heroes popular enough to support four titles every month.

COMICS FEATURE talked to all of the key people involved in creating the comic books so that we could bring you the whole story as artist Herb Trimpe, a long-time Marvel veteran, and writer/editor Larry Hama pull no punches in expaining their missions.

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MARV WOLFMAN ON
The History of the DC Universe

Marv Wolfman, former writer of the **New Teen Titans** and **Crisis on Infinite Earths** and currently of **The Adventures of Superman**, explains how he and artist George Perez tackled the greatest task of all, explaining the entire history of the DC Universe, past present and future, in two volumes!

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SILVER AGE—
Journey with us back to those glorious days when comic books were fun! Superheroes were respected by their communities and always trod the path of justice, everyone was benevolent and caring and there was a good time to be had by all in the summer sun. The tales may not have been realistic, but then again, they weren't meant to be. Gerard Jones points out that there is a place for comic books that don't depress!
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FEATURE NEWS

NEW ALL-STAR FROM THOMAS

The Young All-Stars, the long-announced successor series to **All-Star Squadron**, will debut in late March in DC's $1 offset format.

The first six issues of the magazine are scheduled to form a "mini-series-within-a-series," Roy Thomas explains. "Each of the seven new Young All-Stars will be featured on a cover of his/her own—except that Tsunami and Neptune Perkins will be doubled up on #2, since both are underwater heroes.

"The initial six covers will feature a frame showing about half a dozen adult All-Stars—all DC heroes, since the Quality/Freedom Fighters are being written out around #2, so that I can concentrate on DC heroes as I originally wanted.

"By the end of the sixth issue, all the so-called Young All-Stars will have been featured with about three dozen vintage DC heroes (plus Amazing Man, Firebrand, etc.) in the borders. A complete set of the All-Star Squadron, in essence."

Thomas continues, "In one sense, of course, **The Young All-Stars** is the post-**Crisis** continuation since it picks up in mid-to-late April of 1942, a couple of weeks after the events in **All-Star** #60, the last chronological issue. Due to lack of coordination, Green Arrow and Speedy were belatedly erased from the 1940s chronology. No one discussed it with me till it was too late.

"In another sense, **Young All-Stars** is a new title—which will focus on several new heroes. The group itself will continue to be called the All-Star Squadron; the Young All-Stars merely being an informal, smaller grouping of the (initially) seven super-powered youths aged 15-20, who'll operate more or less independently after the events in the sixth issue.

"It's no secret," Thomas reveals, "that these heroes have been developed from my theory that the energy that was the Golden Age Superman, Wonder Woman, et al., did not vanish. The Young All-Stars and their evil Nazi counterparts, Axis Amerika, are the result.

"Several older members of the Squadron will form a sponsor group and virtually all of the All-Star Squadron will appear at one time or another, either as guest stars or in cameos. But the emphasis will be on the seven Young All-Stars and even newer heroes who will follow. There'll be a couple of real surprises down the line in that vein."

Who are the Young All-Stars?

Here's the lineup:

1) The Golden Age Fury, mother of Infinity Inc.'s Fury. She is essentially a replacement for the original Wonder Woman. She's a war orphan brought back to the US by Johnny Chambers, before he became Johnny Quick;

2) Neptune Perkins is a youth who can swim like a dolphin since a mutation has given him webbed hands and feet and a sodium deficiency which forces him to spend much of his time in saltwater;

3) Tsunami is a Japanese-American who can breathe underwater due to experimentation by Imperial Japanese scientists. She can also create small tidal waves;

4) Dyna-Mite is the explosively-powered fourteen year old sidekick of the adult TNT. When TNT dies and the boy nearly dies with him at the hands of a seven-foot Axis valkyrie named Gudra, Dyna-Mite recovers and becomes a part of the new team;

5) Flying Fox is a Canadian Indian with a mystic-powered cloak that allows him to fly, turn invisible and do other tricks. Dyna-Mite and Flying Fox are respectively, cosmic replacements for Robin and Batman;

6) Iron Munro can jump several hundred feet and run faster than an express train. It takes a powerful explosive shell to pierce his hide. He, of course, is the replacement for Superman and is actually the son of an earlier Superman in a way;

7) The Tigress is the original Huntress and using various sports and hunting abilities, most notably a bow and arrow, she'll be an enigmatic replacement for Green Arrow.

The writers will be Roy and Dann Thomas, who co-created the new series. Regular artists will be Brian Murray on pencils and Malcolm Jones on inks. Roy Thomas will be editor. The first issue will actually feature three pencillers, Vince Argondezzi, Michael Bair and Brian Murray.

Roy Thomas, of course, is the former writer/editor of the original series as well as of the equally new Captain Marvel book and has previously done loads of heroes at virtually every comic book company. His burning interest has always been in World War II era heroes and he writes about them in his column in **COMICS FEATURE** every other month.

ENGLEHART TAKES OVER FF

Steve Englehart is the new writer on **The Fantastic Four.** He will take over with issue #304 at which time Reed and Sue Richards will temporarily retire from the group to spend time with their son, Franklin.

Englehart has said that he wants to change the dynamics of the series thrusting Reed and Sue into the background and making Ben the new leader of the group.

She-Hulk will also leave the group when Roger Stern leaves the book, following him over to **The Avengers.** The replacements will be Ms. Marvel and Crystal.

As Englehart told the **Comics Buyers Guide,** "One of his reasons (for choosing Crystal) is that she's been in the FF before. She's trying to get her life straightened out after the problems I gave her. And—from Ben's point of view—he likes having one of Johnny's old girlfriends around.

"Despite the times he's *said* he's come to terms with Johnny's relationship with Alicia, he hasn't. He's picking Crystal *because* he knows it might cause problems."

Englehart also plans on continuing the temporarily-halted process of making the Thing more grotesque and include a storyline with Doctor Doom.

"I'm real pleased to get **The Fantastic Four.** If you're going to write Marvel comics, that's the book you want to write. I almost got it 15 years ago, and I hope to do some good stuff with it. I've been a fan of the FF for a long time now."

NEW UNIVERSE SUPER SLEUTH SWEEPSTAKES

Fans of Marvel's New Universe titles will have the chance to win original artwork, Marvel jackets, free subscriptions and other prizes in the "Super Sleuth Sweepstakes" announced in the Marvel and New Universe titles carrying the February and March cover dates.

In addition, all direct market comic book stores will receive entry forms to hand out to their customers who don't want to tear the forms out of the comics.

Persons wishing to be eligible for the prizes must answer 16 multiple-choice questions concerning the New Universe. Completed entry forms must then be mailed to Marvel Comics no later than December 31, 1986 and must be received by January 5.

Winners will be chosen at random from those persons who correctly answered all 16 questions. They will be notified by mail and announced in the Bullpen Bulletins.

Comics Consumer Guide

DC

►12/9/86 Shipping Group

☐ **DEMON #4—**
(Last issue) (Wagner/Nichols)

☐ **FURY OF FIRESTORM #58—**
(Ostrander/Brozowski/Mitchell)

☐ **JUSTICE LEAGUE #261—**
(Last Issue of LEGENDS crossover) (DeMatteis/McDonnell/Wray) Final fate of Vixen—and the JLA.

☐ **THE OUTSIDERS #18—**
(Barr/Aparo/Bolland) Vs. Eclipso.

☐ **TALES OF THE TEEN TITANS #76—**
(Wolfman/Barreto/Tanghal) Reprints NTT #17.

☐ **VIGILANTE #40—**
(Direct sales only) (Kupperberg/Smith/Brooks) Concluding two-part White Slave Ring.

☐ **WATCHMEN #8—**
(Of 12) (Moore&Gibbons)

☐ **WONDER WOMAN #8—**
(Perez&Potter/Perez/Patterson) Diana faces Terror Incarnate.

►12/16/86 Shipping Group

☐ **BATMAN #406—**
(Miller/Mazzucchelli) Batman: Year One part three—Selina Kyle becomes Catwoman.

☐ **BLUE BEETLE #11—**
(Wein/Cullins/Barras) Teen Titans vs. Hybrid.

☐ **ELECTRIC WARRIOR #12—**
(Direct sales only) (Moench/Baikie/Marcos)

☐ **LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES #33—**
(Direct sales only) (Levitz/LaRocque/DeCarlo)

☐ **SECRET ORIGINS #13—**
(Mishkin/Larsen/Thomas) Nightwing, The Whip and Johnny Thunder.

☐ **SGT. ROCK #415—**
(Kanigher/A. Kubert)

☐ **STAR TREK #37—**
(Wein/Sutton/Villagran) Post Star Trek IV.

☐ **WHO'S WHO IN STAR TREK #2—**

☐ **SUPERMAN #4—**
(Byrne/Kesel) Killer stalks Metropolis.

►12/23/86 Shipping Group

☐ **ADV OF THE OUTSIDERS #44—**
(Barr/Aparo/Engel) Reprints **Outsiders #6.**

☐ **ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN #427—**
(Wolfman/Ordway)

☐ **BOOSTER GOLD #15—**
(Jurgens/DeCarlo) Guest stars Rip Hunter.

HUB CITY, FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 01:45 P.M. CHARLES VICTOR SEARS HAS EXACTLY 25 HOURS AND 15 MINUTES TO LIVE.
HE HAS BEEN WAITING A WHILE NOW. LISTENING TO THE HISS OF TIRES ON WET PAVEMENT AND THE DRONE OF VOICES FROM INSIDE THE SMALL BUILDING— CURSES, MUTTERS AN OCCASIONAL BARK OF LAUGHTER.
WAITING FOR THE TENSION TO BUILD, FEELING THE KNOT OF EXCITEMENT IN HIS BELLY TIGHTEN AND THE MUSCLES BENEATH HIS CLOTHING TENSE.
HE IS ALMOST READY. IN A MOMENT HE WILL OPEN THE DOOR, HE WILL BURST THROUGH THE DOOR TO DO VIOLENCE OR HAVE VIOLENCE DONE TO HIM.
THAT HE MAY DIE IS OF NO INTEREST TO HIM IN THESE CHARGED SECONDS HERE, NOW. HE IS FULLY ALIVE AND THAT IS WHAT MATTERS...

☐ **GREEN LANTERN CORPS. #211—**
(Englehart/Staton/Farmer)

☐ **INFINITY INC. #37—**
(Direct sales only) (Roy and Dann Thomas/McFarlane/DeZuniga) Origin Northwind.

☐ **THE NEW TEEN TITANS #30—**
(Direct sales only) (Wolfman&Levitz/Barreto/Tanghal) Concluding Brother Blood saga.

☐ **SHAZAM: A NEW BEGINNING #1—**
(OF 4) (LEGENDS crossover) (Thomases/Mandrake) A brand new Big Red Cheese by the Number One Fan of the Golden Age!

☐ **SWAMP THING #59—**
(Moore&Bissette/Veitch/Alcala)

☐ **WHO'S WHO #26—**

►1/6/87 Shipping Group

☐ **ACTION #587—**
(Byrne/Giordano) Guest stars The Demon.

☐ **CAPTAIN ATOM #2—**
(Bates/Broderick/Smith) Guest appearances by Superman, Batman, Firestorm and Blue Beetle.

☐ **DETECTIVE #573—**
(Barr/Davis/Neary)

☐ **HAWKMAN #9—**
(Isabella/Howell/Garzon)

☐ **LEGENDS #6—**
(Last Issue) (Ostrander&Wein/Byrne/Kesel) All-new Wonder Woman, Flash, Suicide Squad and Justice League.

☐ **MASK #3—**
(Fleisher/Swan/Schaffenberger)

☐ **MR. MIRACLE SPECIAL #1—**
(Evanier/Rude/Royer) Vs. Granny Goodness.

☐ **QUESTION #3—**
(Direct sales only) (O'Neil/Cowan/Magyar)

☐ **SPECTRE #1—**
(Moench/Colan/Mitchell) With Madame Xanadu.

☐ **TALES OF THE LEGION #346—**
(Levitz/LaRocque/Mahlstedt&DeCarlo/Cullins) Reprints **Legion #21.**

☐ **TEEN TITANS SPOTLIGHT #9—**
(Kupperberg/Jurgens/Martin) Doom Patrol reintroduced—planned for a Summer '87 title.

MARVEL

►12/2/86 Shipping Group

☐ **DAREDEVIL #241—**
(Nocenti/McFarlane) Good vs. Evil on Xmas.

☐ **G.I. JOE SPECIAL MISSIONS #4—**
(Hama/Trimpe) Jungle action.

☐ **NIGHT MASK #6—**
(Thomas/?) Searching for his kidnaped sister in her dreams.

☐ **PSI FORCE #6—**
(Fingeroth/Texiera)

☐ **STRIKEFORCE: MORITURI #5—**
(Gillis/Anderson/Williams) Another casualty.

☐ **WEB OF SPIDER-MAN #25—**
(Layton/Fern/Colletta) Hobgoblin and Kingpin.

☐ **WEST COAST AVENGERS #19—**
(Englehart/Milgrom/Sinnott) Guest-starring Two-Gun Kid, Rawhide Kid and Nightrider. Continuing battle against Rama Tut.

☐ **COMET MAN #3—**
(of 6) (Mumy & Ferrar/Jones/Talaoc) Battles Hulk, guesting Reed Richards.

☐ **NEW MUTANTS #50—**
(Claremont/Guice/Beatty) Guest starring Professor X and the Starjammers. Giant-sized wrap-up to Magus storyline. Change in Magik.

☐ **AVENGERS vs. THE X-MEN #1—**
(Of 4) (Stern/Silvestri/Rubinstein) (Direct sales only) Magneto, X-Men, Avengers and Soviet Super Soldiers.

►12/9/86 Shipping Group

☐ **ALPHA FLIGHT #45—**
(Mantlo/Brigman/Portacio) Vindicator copes with Snowbird's death, return of Sasquatch.

☐ **AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #287—**
(Owsley/Kupperberg) Part 4 of Gang War.

☐ **CAPTAIN AMERICA #328—**
(Gruenwald/Neary/Colletta) Introducing Cap's new partner, D-Man.

☐ **FALLEN ANGELS #1—**
(Of 6) (Duffy/Gammill/Palmer)

☐ **G.I. JOE VS. TRANSFORMERS #4—**
(Of 4) (Higgins/Trimpe/Colletta) Final showdown with Cobra and Decepticons on one side and Joes and Transformers on the other.

☐ **KICKERS, INC. #6—**
(Mackie/Saviuk)

☐ **MERC #6—**
(Murray/Morrow) A raid on Harlem to rescue Mal's daughter.

☐ **STRANGE TALES #1—**
(Mantlo/Blevins/Austin) Cloak and Dagger; (Gillis/Warner/Emberlin) Dr. Strange.

☐ **POWER PACK #29—**
(L. Simonson/Bogdanove/Green) Guest stars Spiderman and Hobgoblin.

☐ **FANTASTIC FOUR VS. X-MEN #3—**
(Claremont/Bogdanove/Austin) FF disbands, will Dr. Doom save Kitty Pryde.

☐ **MEPHISTO VS. FOUR HEROES #1—**
(of 4) Lord of Evil faces first Thor, then X-Men, then X-Factor and in this issue, a lead off with FF as Mephisto goes after Franklin.

☐ **SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN #134—**
(Black and white magazine) (Yakata/A. Kubert) First Conan by Kubert.

☐ **STAR COMICS DIGEST #3—**

☐ **AVENGERS INDEX #1—**
(Direct sales only)

►12/16/86 Shipping Group

☐ **MARVEL AGE #49—**

☐ **AVENGERS #278—**
(Stern/Buscema/Palmer) Three new Avengers, Dr. Druid, Thor and She-Hulk join.

☐ **CONAN THE BARBARIAN #193—**
(Owsley/Semeiks/Isherwood)

☐ **D.P. 7 #6—**
(Gruenwald/Ryan/Tanghal)

☐ **GI JOE #58—**
(Hama/Whigham/Mushynsky) Dusty and Mainframe in the desert, Cobra Commander gets a new look and Billy wakes up.

☐ **INCREDIBLE HULK #330—**
(Milgrom/McFarlane) Death of Thunderbolt Ross.

☐ **JUSTICE #6—**
(Englehart/Isherwood) Justice's brother?

☐ **MARVEL TALES #198—**
(Claremont/Byrne) Reprints **Marvel Team-Up #54.**

☐ **THE 'NAM #5—**
(Murray/Golden/Gil) Top Sergeant gets his!

☐ **X-MEN #216—**
(Claremont/Guice/Green) Stonewall, Super Sabre and the Crimson Commando.

☐ **MARVEL SAGA #17—**

☐ **THE DEATH OF GROO GRAPHIC**

►12/23/86 Shipping Group

☐ **FANTASTIC FOUR #301—**
(Stern/J. Buscema/S. Buscema) Team reunited then Thing and Franklin kidnaped.

☐ **IRON MAN #217—**
(Michelinie/Bright/Layton) Stark struggles to rebuild Stark Ent. Begins storyline with Justin Hammer as behind-the-scenes villain.

☐ **PETER PARKER #125—**
(Fingeroth/Mooney)

☐ **SPITFIRE #7—**
(Conway/Trimpe) New armor for Spitfire.

☐ **STAR BRAND #7—**
(Shooter/Romita Jr./Williamson) Second of two parts.

☐ **THOR #378—**
(W. Simonson/S. Buscema) God/Giants war as Giants attack Asgard.

☐ **TRANSFORMERS #27—**
(Budlansky/Perlin/Akin & Garvey) Guest starring Dinobots.

☐ **X-FACTOR #15—**
(L. Simonson/W. Simonson) Angel loses wings, begins intro of Archangel.

☐ **CLASSIC X-MEN #8—**

☐ **GI JOE DIGEST #8—**
Reprints #6, 7 and 8.

MARV WOLFMAN DISCOVERS THE DC UNIVERSE

Marv Wolfman, known to comic book fans as the author of **The Teen Titans** and **Crisis on Infinite Earths**, is about to launch a new two-part miniseries outlining the entire history of the DC Universe. If **Crisis** redefined the DC Universe, **History** outlines what remains after the crisis. DC Comics sent us a press release in the form of an interview of Wolfman by some unnamed DC staffer. As a public service we present it in its entirety:

Q: After the incredible task of writing Crisis on Infinite Earths, what possessed you to write History of the DC Universe?

A: Insanity! Terminal insanity. Actually, **History** was always planned to be the final two chapters of **Crisis**. We set up the new DC Universe, then we were going to chart and explain it. However, the story in **Crisis** expanded as more and more crossovers were planned, and my ideas for **History** expanded, too, so I requested a special **History of the DC Universe** mini-series to fully explain all the ramifications of the **Crisis** and to let all DC readers know what's out there. The **History of the DC Universe** serves a very different function from **Who's Who: The Definitive Directory of the DC Universe. Who's Who** is a directory of every character. **History** puts it all in perspective. Who was where, when and why.

Q: What was the most difficult part in writing History?

A: Trying to explain everything in a nice, unobtrusive style, yet still make the book interesting to our readers. It is told first person. Also, fitting the copy into the spaces available while still giving all the information necessary—that was extremely difficult.

Q: What was the most fun?

A: Watching the artwork come in. George Perez has outdone himself on this book. It's visually everything we envisioned—and more.

Q: How did you and George work things out, now that you're both living on opposite ends of the continent?

A: George and I worked out the visual concepts six months before I moved to California. The history itself is straightforward—everything hung on *how* we told it. The fact is, the writing is the least important part of the book, and part of my job was to keep it in the background. We very much wanted a pictorial history.

Q: How did you happen upon the History of the DC Universe format of pictures interspersed with typeset captions? Why did you choose this method of telling the DC Universe past?

A: From the very beginning, we wanted to do a book in what I call the "Time/Life" style—the hardcover Time/Life books with great art and minimal but informative text. We wanted the book to be non-comics art, that is no storytelling in prose as much as storytelling in illustration. It had to be

full-painted color where color and art were one. The text was to be brief yet informative. Almost styleless. Since it wasn't going to be comics, it had to be typeset and not hand-lettered.

Q: Is this the *definitive* history?

A: Definitely! Later on, throughout the years, new information can be fed into the framework we set up, but this information is the current DC Universe. It won't change. Characters may move in, die, change, etc., but it won't alter what already is. All DC Universe comics now have a common past, present and future through which they can weave their stories.

Q: Was there anything about DC history that you learned while writing the books?

A: Yeah! There were dozens of characters I'd never heard of in the timeline we worked up. I wasn't quite sure who came first, where this fit in with that, etc. It took a lot of research, and I'd done a lot while writing **Crisis.**

Q: What prompted the change in format from a three-volume series to a two-volume comic book-sized graphic novel?

A: We first discussed a one-part graphic novel, but at 96 pages the cost would have been prohibitive—over $10. DC wanted to keep the price down and suggested three 32-paged books. At $2.50 each, that would reduce the package to $7.50. Then, with the success of the **Dark Knight** format, we saw we could lower the cost even further by producing two 48-page books at $2.95, bringing the total cost under $6.00, almost half what we originally discussed. I think this is the first time a company has ever so drastically searched for a format that would lower the price sufficiently so the readers would benefit more than the company. There is no change in page count or quality of printing, and just a very minor change in the physical size of the page from the graphic novel page to the comic book page. But the minor change allowed us to cut the price in half.

History of the DC Universe is a book that George and I as well as all DC Comics feel every comics reader should own. It truly explains everything about DC Comics' heroes, so even non-DC readers will find it both entertaining and informative. More than any other title, it's a 'must buy,' and we wanted the price low enough for all comics fans to be able to afford it.

Q: Now that you're done with History of the DC Universe, what are you looking forward to?

A: A long vacation on a beach.

9/18/86 Release

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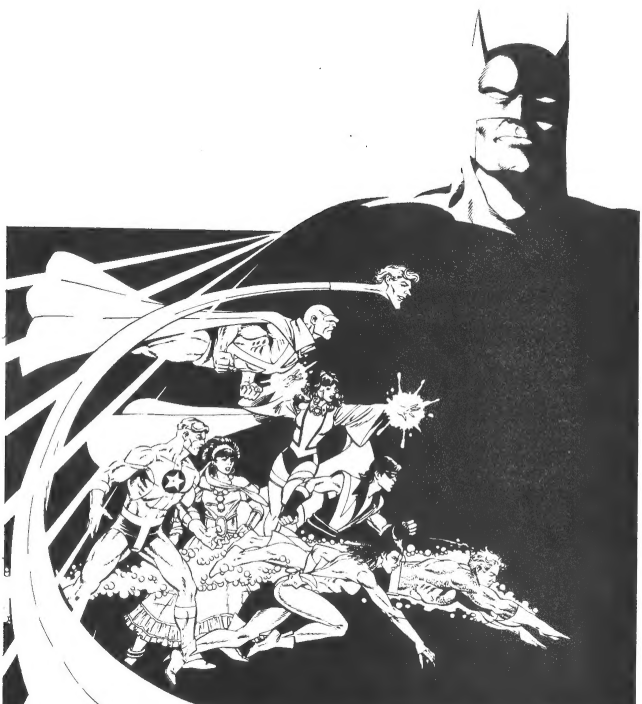

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While some information is indeed communicated in their release, and it is the only material we have to go on since the company has actively worked to block contact with all industry reporters, much is unasked. There are simply a great deal of contradictions in the continuity of the DC Universe caused by the **Crisis** series that should have been addressed, and hopefully will be in the two-volume mini-series. DC instead chose to present a poorly disguised sales pitch in place of that information. While even interviews conducted by the best of reporters often contain promotion for the subject covered, it is not usually so blatant and does not so ignore the basic issues to do so.

A question for our readers to answer remains: should this type of company spoon-fed interview be printed? Should it be printed in the deliberate absence of a real interview? This release would appear to be DC's answer to our complaint that their press releases simply cannot be used to constitute a feature article and that access to the press is essential. You be the judge—and let us know what you think!

One thing does seem to come through in the release though, Marv Wolfman is getting tired. On September 23, DC Comics announced that he is at least temporarily giving up writing both **The New Teen Titans** and **Teen Titans Spotlight**. **CF**

Independent Line

SWORD IN STONE

Beginning in January, S.I.S. Productions will ship the first of several new series. **Corbo**, a masked vigilante based in 1936, fights the new wave of organized crime. "We hope to capture the same excitement as those great serials and pulp magazines of the thirties and forties," explains Publisher Roger Broughton.

"The master of night and shadow, Mike Kaluta, lends his incredible talents to the cover of number one while award-winning Canadian illustrator Patrick Hamou graces the story. You have probably seen Geoff's work in **King Conan**, **Daredevil**, **G.I. Joe** and, of course, **Justice**, from the new Marvel Universe series."

AIRCEL DROPS ADVENTURERS

REPRINTS ELFLORD & SAMURAI

Aircel Publishing has announced the cancellation of **The Adventurers** effective with the second issue. The games-oriented adventure comic caused a bit of a stir when the first issue was published with two different covers, one of which had a deliberately small print run. In these times when independent comics have experienced a collecting fervor from titles selling out quickly and becoming instant high priced collectors items, some viewed the move as a very calculated maneuver. Some comic shops have already begun to prominently display the two variant editions in their back issue racks.

But fans of Aircel will be glad to know that their early, scarcer issues, such as **Elflord** 1 and 2 and **Samurai** 2 are being reprinted. **Samurai** #1 has already been reprinted.

Aircel has already begun adding color to their titles. **Elflord** vol. 2 #1 was the first color issue of that title and **Dragonring** will go to color after issue 6, beginning with vol. 2 #1 as well. There are no immediate plans to go to color on the other titles although a **Samurai** graphic novel has been discussed which would use color. It's felt that the fans of the **Samurai** monthly prefer black and white and for the time being would resist adding color.

Aircel will have a companion title of sorts with **Elflord** next spring with the publication of **Darkwood**, a book which will feature the magician from **Elflord** who is able to travel to different worlds, ergo his appearance in two titles set on different planets.

GRAPXPRESS PRESENTS MORPHS!

New from Graphxpress is **Morphs** (short for anthropomorphic).

"This is our version of **Critters**," **says** Jim Groat, president of Grapxpress. "We feel that there's not enough new 'funny animal' artists (excluding the four title mutant rip-offs of the ninja turtles), so therefore we decided to debut some of these deserving artists. The first issue will have as its contributors: Jerry Collins, Tom Linehan, John Spiedel, Phil Morrissey and others. **Morphs** will debut in January with a cover price of $2.00 and will be a black and white quarterly."

Graphxpress also publishes **Equine The Uncivilized**, a comic about anthropormorphic barbarian horses. Pencilled by Jim Groat (President of Graphxpress), **Equine** is written by Richard Konkle. The second issue of **Equine** has seen print and issue three is planned for a February release.

N.Y. SUBWAYS TO SHOWCASE COMIC BOOK AD CAMPAIGN

Dateline New York: He's handsome, dynamic, powerful! He's **Armor**, a comic book superhero *and* a subway poster ad. You've never seen an ad to advertise a comic book before, but Continuity Publishing has made more than a taken investment on behalf of their superstar. For the month of November, Armor will be peering out at straphangers from over 500 spots throughout NY's massive underground.

Continuity's associate publisher Kristine Adams explains that "This bold forway into a strange new media environment marks the first time our comic book characters have ventured from their traditional specialty shop domain onto the newsstands. To emphasize the move we have undertaken *the first* comic book advertising campaign *ever*! Comic books have been part of the American scene for more than 40 years, but they have never been advertised. We're behind **Armor** 100% and want to give him every opportunity to make a name for himself."

Almost 600 copies of the poster will be positioned next to magazine stands throughout the subway system. But to give art fanciers an opportunity to add Armor to their collection *without* personally peeling the poster from Transit Authority walls, Continuity has thoughtfully included their address, 62 West 45th Stree, so that "fan"-atics can purchase posters directly.

Continuity publisher Neal Adams has illustrated such major characters as Green Lantern, Batman and The X-Men and his startling visual eye is currently apparent in his production designs for Stuart Gordon's new film **From Beyond**. **Nannaz**, an independent film which Adams wrote and directed, will premiere in early 1987.

It began as a comic with an unlikely sounding title conceived by a pair of writer/artists, Kevin Eastman & Peter Laird, who had a better idea. Today, just 2½ years later, fans have embraced the comic with such enthusiasm that this black & white comic book with slick color covers is selling over 100,000 copies an issue!

"It was May '84 when we put out that first issue," Laird recalls. "At that time we weren't even sure that we could sell those 3,000 copies of the first printing of the first issue. Our latest book, issue #9, just shipped 115,000 copies. So things have changed a lot in 2½ years. I know that it sells more than some of Marvel's books. I've talked to some comic store owners who say that the number of Turtles they sell is comparable to the number of **X-Men** and **Teen Titans** that they sell. I don't think that applies in every store in the direct market, but we've heard it from quite a few people."

The idea to go the self-publishing route with **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles** came about when another project they had submitted to some of the independant publishers received consistent rejections and they couldn't bear to see their latest brainchild go the same unhappy route.

"Our book **Fugitoid** was developed before we did the Turtles," Peter reveals. "We had 30 pages of it which we were sending around to all the independant publishers in the hopes of selling it as a backup story. However, all we got were all kinds of nice rejection letters. Then we came up with the idea of the Turtles and we couldn't bear the idea of rejection of it, so we decided to go with it ourselves. We really never thought of selling it to anybody else. It was something that we just felt strongly that we wanted to see in print and we knew that we could do it ourselves."

"It was all inspired by the self-publishing artists such as Dave Sim publishing **Cerebus** off on his own and

having success with," Kevin Eastman adds.

While the first printing of **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles** consisted of only 3,000 copies (which now fetch over $100.00 each on the collectors market), the issue has gone through three subsequent printings bringing the total up to more than 60,000 copies in print. Issue #2 is in its third printing now, sporting a special wraparound cover painting by Richard Corben. Corben also contributed a 4 page full color strip wich ran as an insert in issue #7.

IT'S ALL FRANK MILLER'S FAULT

Turtles began as a loving parody of Frank Miller's work on **Daredevil** and **Ronin**. The cover of the first issue of **Turtles** is even a takeoff on the style of the **Ronin** covers while the origin of the Turtles (who live in our reality, not a funny animal world) does a spin on the origin of Daredevil by adding one small sequence which Marvel Comics overlooked in reporting the accident which both crippled and enhanced Mathew Murdock. It has to do with the dislodged cylinder of radioactive material, a goldfish bowl containing 4 pet turtles and an open manhole where all wind up. The radioactive material mutates the turtles into humanoid forms down in the slimey depths and they're discovered and trained by a similarly enhanced rat named Splinter (a takeoff on the Miller created character Stick, who trained the young Matt Murdock to deal with the conflicts of his supersenses). Moving beyond the parody nature of their origin, the book has quickly developed an identity and sensibility all its own, even having a 4 issue storyline which was intergalactic in scope while also revealing just what had been in that strange radioactive cylinder — and who it belonged to.

The art on the book (which, like the writing, is a collaboration between Eastman and Laird) is quite unique in comics as it makes an abundant use of crafting doubletone, an attractive shading process used a great deal by the classic newspaper strip artists of the Thirties and Forties but which is all but a lost and abandoned art form today.

"The duoshades was something that I've played with a few times years ago," Laird states. "I had some scraps of it lying around and Kevin saw it, tried it out and really liked it,

so we decided to go for it."

"I thought it kind of went along with doing a parody of the origin of Daredevil," says Kevin, "since I was a Miller/Janson fan and Klaus Janson had done some really neat crafting work on the actual Daredevil comic. He didn't use much of it, but what he did use really stood out. We thought it would be neat using the duoshade because we'd get a total of four different tones — black, white and two different shades of gray."

Prior to embarking on their creative self-publishing endeavors, Peter had been a freelance illustrator for 8 years, primarily doing editorial illos for a newspaper in North Hampton, Mass. Kevin had done comics work for some New Wave comics published by Clay Geerdes and for Brad Foster's **Goodies** magazine.

While the initial groundswell of enthusiasm for the **Turtles** took the creators by surprise, they feel they know why the book has a continuing following, although it involves a number of factors.

"There's a lot of action and the characters of the Turtles are appealing because they're basically nice guys," Laird states.

"I think that it's because it's easy to read and has an interesting storyline," Kevin adds. "We try to approach each book to contain the basic elements of adventure and excitement that you find in **Raiders of the Lost Ark**."

"We also try to keep the storytelling simple and direct," Laird continues, "and try not to get very convoluted with Chris Claremont-type plots where many different things are happening simultaneously. We like to keep things pretty streamlined. I think that Claremont's style is more easily done in a monthly book.

"Kevin and I have said to each other many times that we're trying to keep it, at most, PG rated, and it's worked out for the best since quite a large proportion of our audience are kids and we try to keep it at a level that's enjoyable for them. You can tell a good story without resorting to a lot of profanity or excessive violence, not that we don't appreciate that stuff in the material we like to read. There's a lot of violent action in our books, but not really very much violence. I think that Kevin and I both see the difference between action and violence."

THE TURTLES GRAPHIC NOVEL

The independant publisher First Comics will shortly release a slick graphic novel reprinting the first three issues of **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles**. Those of you who don't have access to comic book specialty stores will be able to sample the Turtles by visiting Waldenbooks and B. Dalton outlets. If the graphic novel sells well there, the **Turtles** black and white comic might well start appearing in those outlets. What makes the graphic novel special, among other things, is that it's reprinting the first three issues in color, as well as presenting the artwork retouched by Eastman and Laird.

"Kevin and I went through and used some whiteout and some ink and touched up some faces and anatomy here and there," Laird reveals. "Plus it's all been relettered. The first three issues were lettered by Kevin, but our current letterer, Steven Levine, has gone over it and relettered it." The issues are appearing in color for the first time and it is being done by dropping out a lot of the tone work, thus giving the art a very different look from its black and white version.

"Then there's twelve completely new pages — two separate six page stories. It was an experiment in that it was the first time that Kevin and I had done Turtle stories by ourselves. We each took six pages and did whatever we wanted to. Kevin's story was inked by Brian Brown, who's working with us now. My story was inked by Jim Lawson, who's also working with us."

TELLING THE TURTLES APART

When readers started pointing out that the Turtles all seemed to look alike and that they could only be distinguished one from the other by the weapons they carried, Eastman and Laird decided that they wanted to do some stories which clearly differentiated the different personalities of the quartet. The result, the micro-series!

Turtles © Eastman & Laird, Cerebus ©Dave Sim

TURTLES in combat with a little help from their friend, CEREBUS, THE AARDVARK!

"We decided we wanted to do some kind of parody of the 4 issue mini-series and 12 issue maxi-series books," Laird relates. "So we decided on the one-issue micro-series. In those books we planned to go into the actual personality of each Turtle a little deeper. Raphael was more of a berserker and is the rougher of them. So the **Raphael** book is really violent with a lot of action going on. **Michelangelo** was the next one. We consider him the more fun loving — the joker of the crowd. So although his story was adventure, it was centered around toys and toy stores, with Michelangelo playing in the snow and is a little more light hearted. Then there was **Donatello** and the next one, out in December, features **Leonardo**.

"We've been considering doing one on Splinter, possibly next year, and possibly one featuring Casey Jones (a berserk vigilante featured in **Raphael**.) There's also another possibility — that we could do each Turtle over again."

Other Turtle related products (a role-playing game, tie-in comics on martial arts and how-to-draw the Turtles) have been licensed to other companies to free Eastman and Laird to draw the regular books they plan to issue over the course of a year.

"There are 6 books a year coming out from us," states Laird. "Four regular issues of **Turtles**, one one-shot and one issue of a micro-series."

After two and a half years, the popularity of **Turtles** is not waning a bit. Eastman and Laird have proven that if you come up with an entertaining idea and you have the talent to bring it off, the world really will beat a path to your door.

EPIC

- ☐ MOONSHADOW #12—
- ☐ GROO THE WANDERER #26—
- ☐ ELEKTRA: ASSASSIN #7—
- ☐ ELFQUEST #21—
- ☐ ALIEN LEGION #18—
- ☐ STEELGRIP STARKEY #6—

COMICO

- ☐ ELEMENTALS #11—
- ☐ JONNY QUEST #7—
- ☐ MAGE #15—
- ☐ JUSTICE MACHINE #1—
- ☐ GRENDEL #4—
- ☐ ROBOTECH, THE MACROSS SAGA #15—
- ☐ ROBOTECH MASTERS #13—

ECLIPSE

- ☐ AIRBOY #11—
- ☐ ALIEN ENCOUNTERS #10—
- ☐ SCOUT #14—
- ☐ SOMERSET HOLMES GRAPHIC ALBUM
- ☐ ZOONIVERSE #—
- ☐ HAWKMAN INDEX #3—
- ☐ ZORRO GRAPHIC ALBUM—
- ☐ LUGER #2—
- ☐ THE NEW WAVE #11—
- ☐ MR. MONSTER #7—
- ☐ PHOEBE ZEIT-GEIST
- ☐ JLA INDEX #7—
- ☐ HAMSTERS 3-D #4—
- ☐ NEW DNAGENTS #16—
- ☐ VILLAINS & VIGILANTES #1—

FIRST

- ☐ NEXUS #31—
- ☐ BADGER #22—
- ☐ BRIMJACK #33—
- ☐ GHOSTBUSTERS #3—
- ☐ WHISPER #6—
- ☐ AMERICAN FLAGG! #39—
- ☐ DYNAMO JOE #6—
- ☐ JON SABLE, FREELANCE #46—
- ☐ ELRIC: WEIRD WHITE WOLF #4—
- ☐ SHATTER #8—

QUALITY

- ☐ JUDGE DREDD #7—
- ☐ SAM SLADE ROBO-HUNTER #7—
- ☐ 2000 AD PRESENTS #13—
- ☐ ROGUE TROOPER #7—
- ☐ SPELLBINDERS #5—
- ☐ THE MIDNIGHT SURFER SPECIAL —

MISC.

- ☐ Elflord #4 (AIRCEL)—
- ☐ DRAGONRING VOL II #1 (AIRCEL)—
- ☐ FEMFORCE #6 (AMERICOMICS)—
- ☐ NIGHTVEIL #7 (AMERICOMICS)—
- ☐ PRIORITY: WHITE HEAT #1 (AMERI)—
- ☐ GREAT AMERICAN WESTERN #1 (AMERI)
- ☐ ARCTIC COMICS #1 (ARCTIC)—
- ☐ LITTLE NEMO #1 (BLACKTHORNE)—
- ☐ ARMOR #4 (CONTINUITY)—
- ☐ SAMUREE #2 (CONTINUITY)—
- ☐ MS. MYSTIC #3 (CONTINUITY)—
- ☐ ECHOES OF FUTUREPAST #13 (CONT)
- ☐ WAYFARERS #2 (ETERNITY)—
- ☐ FLESH & BONES #4 (FANTA)—
- ☐ MIRACLE SQUAD #3 (FANTA)—
- ☐ CODE NAME: TOMAHAWK #2 (FG)—
- ☐ FUTURE COURSE #1 (FG)—
- ☐ TERRANAUTS #3 (FG)—
- ☐ TIME WARRIORS #6 (FG)—
- ☐ TIME OUT OF MIND #3 (GRAPHIC)—
- ☐ CHROME # (HOT)—
- ☐ THE SATURDAY KNIGHTS #3 (HOT)—
- ☐ A BOY & HIS BOT #1 (NOW)—
- ☐ SYPHONS #4 (NOW)—
- ☐ VALOR THUNDERBOLT #1 (NOW)—
- ☐ VECTOR #4 (NOW)—
- ☐ COBALT BLUE (PIED PIPER)—
- ☐ HERO ALLIANCE ALBUM (PIED PIPER)

- ☐ DEATHLAND 2000 ALBUM (PIED PIP)
- ☐ ETERNITY SMITH #4 (RENEGADE)—
- ☐ GI ROBOT #1 (WONDER)—
- ☐ TERRAFORMERS #1 (WONDER)—
- ☐ LUNATIC FRINGES #1 (WONDER)—
- ☐ HERO ALLIANCE #1 (WONDER)—
- ☐ POWER FACTOR #1 (WONDER)—

FOLLOWING ARE THE SCHEDULED BLACK AND WHITE COMICS TO BE PUBLISHED. NOTE THAT THESE PUBLISHERS' FREQUENTLY DO NOT MEET THEIR PROMISED SCHEDULES AND THAT SOME ANNOUNCED BOOKS NEVER APPEAR AT ALL. ALSO NOTE THAT QUALITY VARIES FROM THE EXCELLENT TO THE UNBEARABLE!

- ☐ PUMA BLUES #2—
- ☐ CEREBUS #93—
- ☐ ADV OF SPENCER SPOOK #4—
- ☐ ADVENTURERS #4—
- ☐ SAMURAI #13—
- ☐ STARK FUTURE #7—
- ☐ WARLOCK FIVE #2—
- ☐ AMAZING COMICS PREMIERES #1—
- ☐ DAEMON MASK #1—
- ☐ EX-MUTANTS #5—
- ☐ JACK FROST #1—
- ☐ KAMIKAZE CAT #1—
- ☐ THE NEW HUMANS #1—
- ☐ PHIGMENTS #1—
- ☐ TALES OF THE SUN RUNNERS #3—
- ☐ SUN RUNNERS CHRISTMAS SP #1—
- ☐ WABBIT WAMPAGE #1—
- ☐ ELFQUEST #2—
- ☐ FANTASCI #5—
- ☐ SPACE ARK #3—
- ☐ THUNDERBUNNY #9—
- ☐ UNICORN ISLE #5—
- ☐ TALES FROM THE ANIVERSE #5—
- ☐ HEROES #5—
- ☐ KENDRA #1—
- ☐ ALIEN DUCKLINGS #2—
- ☐ ATOMIC MAN #1—
- ☐ CHAMELEON COMMANDOS #3—
- ☐ DICK TRACY MONTHLY #8—
- ☐ FREAK OUT ON INFINITE EARTHS #1—
- ☐ HAMSTER VICE #5—
- ☐ GOLDEN FEATURES #6—
- ☐ LAFFIN' GAS #4—
- ☐ NERVOUS REX #9—
- ☐ REVOLVING DOORS #2—
- ☐ ROACHMILL #1—
- ☐ TALES OF THE JACKALOPE #6—
- ☐ PURPLE SNIT #2—
- ☐ B-MOVIE PRESENTS... #4—
- ☐ TIME TRAVELING THIEVES #1—
- ☐ BORIS THE BEAR #5—
- ☐ COMBAT WOMBAT #1—
- ☐ THE DREAMERY #1—
- ☐ GIANT SIZE MINI COMICS #3—
- ☐ PORTIA PRINZ #1—
- ☐ TALES OF THE BEANWORLD #
- ☐ THE MIGHTY MITES #2-5—
- ☐ NINJA #3—
- ☐ REIGN OF THE DRAGONLORD #2—
- ☐ SHANGHAIED ! #1—
- ☐ CAPTAIN JACK #7—
- ☐ CRITTERS #11—
- ☐ DOG BOY #1—
- ☐ PARTICLE DREAMS #3—
- ☐ THREAT #11—
- ☐ FRANK THE UNICORN #3—
- ☐ PENGUIN & PENCILGUIN #1—
- ☐ THE RUBES REVUE #2—
- ☐ BATTLE TO THE DEATH #1—
- ☐ BLACKSTAR #1—
- ☐ NAZRAT #1—
- ☐ WINOBLADE #1—
- ☐ AMUSED TO NO END #1—
- ☐ JUICY TALES #1—
- ☐ ALIEN FIRE #1—
- ☐ DEATH RATTLE #8—
- ☐ SPIRIT #26—
- ☐ TEX BENSON #3—
- ☐ WILD THINGS #1—
- ☐ LEONARDO #1—
- ☐ DRAGON STAR #1—
- ☐ THE JAM SPECIAL #1—
- ☐ NEW TRIUMPH/NORTHGUARD #1—
- ☐ EB'NN #6—
- ☐ PRIME SLIME TALES #4—
- ☐ RALPH SNART #3—
- ☐ SILVERWING SP—
- ☐ THEOWN #2—
- ☐ BARBARIC TALES #3—
- ☐ DARK VISIONS #1—
- ☐ DIMENSION Z #1—
- ☐ SWORDS AND SCIENCE #2—
- ☐ SHERLOCK HOLMES #5—
- ☐ FILES OF MS TREE VOLUME III—
- ☐ MAXWELL MOUSE FOLLIES #5—
- ☐ MS TREE #35—
- ☐ STRATA #5—
- ☐ FAT FREDDY'S CAT #6—
- ☐ CRITTER CORPS #1—
- ☐ GAMBIT #2—
- ☐ CRACKBUSTERS #2—
- ☐ CRYPTIC TALES #1—
- ☐ DRAGON QUEST #1—
- ☐ THE DUNGEONEERS #4—
- ☐ FAT NINJA #5—
- ☐ GRIPS #4—
- ☐ STETCH #1—
- ☐ BARABAS #3—
- ☐ SAMURAI PENGUIN #4—
- ☐ AMAZING WAHOO #2—
- ☐ ESCAPE TO THE STARS #1—
- ☐ GI JACKRABBITS #1—
- ☐ CRIMINALLY INSANE #1—
- ☐ REAGAN'S RAIDERS #3—
- ☐ ROCKHEADS #1—
- ☐ THUNDER—
- ☐ CAPTAIN CONFEDERACY #4—
- ☐ TO BE ANNOUNCED #5—
- ☐ TROLLORDS #6—
- ☐ BLACKMOON #3—
- ☐ THOSE CRAZY PECKERS #1—
- ☐ KOMODO AND THE DEFIANTS #2—
- ☐ PHASE ONE #4—
- ☐ SHURIKEN #6—
- ☐ ADAM & EVE #8—
- ☐ ADV OF BOC #1—
- ☐ ADV RICK RAYGUN #5—
- ☐ BOFFO LAFFS #4—
- ☐ ENTROPY TALES #3—
- ☐ FISH POLICE #6—
- ☐ MEGATON #7—

NOTE TO PUBLISHERS:

Because there are so many black and whites to keep track of and list in a very limited amount of space, and because our typesetter is going bananas, and because many announced are never published, we are requesting that all publishers send us a copy of each book as it is released. If we do not receive your books, we will assume that you are not publishing them and will not list any titles you announce. Please send them to INDEPENDENT LINE, 8399 Topanga Cyn Blvd, Canoga Park, CA 91304. Frankly, our typesetter is hoping that you don't send any!!!!

HAPPY HAL'S HOWLINGS CONTD.

The other individual that I am going to tell you about was born in 1922 in New York City. As a youth he won the **New York Herald Tribune's** essay contest for three consecutive months. He dreamed about growing up and writing great novels one day.

That was his life's ambition but he had to survive in the mean time and his family was not wealthy. So he went to work in a factory owned by a relative. Because he really didn't expect to be doing the work he began for very long, and because he did not want to become known for it he took on a different name. He planned to return to his born identity when the time was right and he was able to write that Great American Novel he just knew he would pen one day.

But the decades passed by and he still found himself laboring away at the same factory, although the company had changed names a few times. He became more and more frustrated as time went on.

That man considered himself a failure for years even derisively signing many of his public messages with a term that meant "wood shavings normally used for stuffing couches and chairs" for that was how he regarded what he was creating.

Yet despite his unhappiness at not pursuing the labor he felt destined to perform, the world began to hear of what he was creating at that small factory. In fact some of his creations became veritable household words.

Eventually he resigned himself to his given destiny and formally had his name changed to the one he had assumed many years before. That new name was Stan Lee, derived from his born name of Stanley Leiber. The creations he helped bring to life include Spider-Man, the Silver Surfer, the Fantastic Four and many, many others. And as Paul Harvey would say, that's the rest of the story!

—Happy Hal

SCORECARD

In the interests of best serving our readers and as a tribute to the greatest editor that ever lived—in Happy Hal's opinion at least!—John Campbell, we are launching a new feature with this issue. Years ago, in **Astounding/Analog** magazine, which he edited so brilliantly for so many years, Campbell asked his readers to rate the contents of his magazine in the order in which they enjoyed them, from most favorite to least, and published the results. This served to give him a guide as to which types of material to most pursue and helped to let the writers know how well the readers thought they were doing. So, in the interests of originality—or, if an idea's good why not steal it!—we will begin doing that in **COMICS FEATURE**. Again, there is no prize for this, but you can be a real help to Ol' Happy Hal and have a real voice in picking the contents of your favorite magazine! And why not give the writers you most enjoy something of a boost as well? So here's how this one works:

Each issue we'll list the contents of the mag (features, columns and departments) on the contents page—where else?—and you simply jot them down on a letter or postcard with a number next to them, ranking them in the order in which you most enjoyed them—for example: Happy Hal's Howlings, number one! As soon as these begin to roll in, which should start with the ratings for the contents of this issue, we will rank the articles in order of your preference and print the results on the letters page each issue. We will use this information as one of the factors in selecting the contents of future issues. I must warn you that while this information will be very important in choosing what appears in **COMICS FEATURE**, it will not be the sole factor. Sometimes a piece or type of material is simply too important not to run and even though we know it will not find favor with most of our readers we will run it anyway. But—don't worry—we will make sure that you love most of what is in each issue. Fair? We're not stupid and do know that we have to keep our readers happy!

Monsterland's EVILA and Rocketeer Dave Stevens at the West Coast Comics Convention. COMICS FEATURE's contributing editor, James Van Hise edits MONSTERLAND. Check it out!

NEXT ISSUE: Four big letters pages, count 'em!

HEROES

BY JAMES VAN HISE

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PRINCE NAMOR OF ATLANTIS, THE SUB-MARINER!

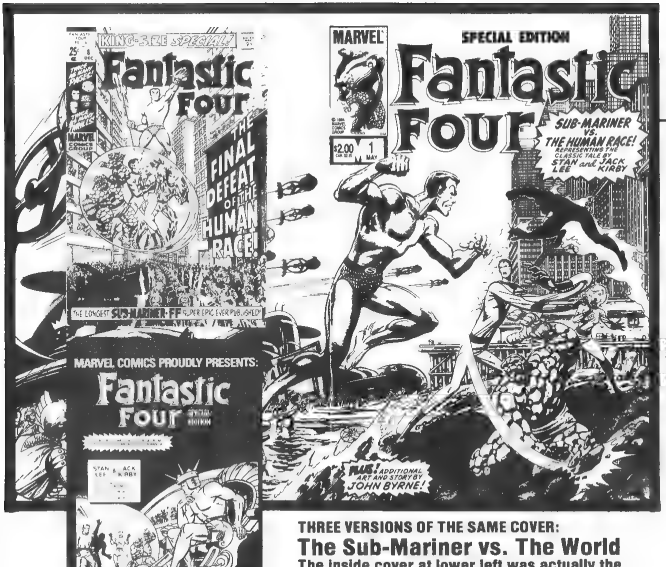
Only two of Marvel's current regulars have been in their lineup since the Golden Age of comics. One of them suffered hibernation for a time while the other returned after years of amnesiac wandering. His name is Prince Namor, the Sub-Mariner, and whenever Marvel (whether they were calling themselves Timely or Atlas) was publishing superheroes, Namor was at the forefront.

You don't expect to see Joe Shuster on Superman or Bob Kane on Batman, yet created in 1939 by Bill Everett, Namor, unlike any other character this side of Will Eisner's The Spirit, or C.C. Beck's Captain Marvel, has had his original artist/creator involved with his stories whenever he appeared.

The hero was launched at the same time that Carl Burgos conceived the Human Torch. Publisher Martin Goodman contracted for a book which would become **Marvel Comics** 1 (retitled **Marvel Mystery Comics** with the second issue). Everett worked with others to create the package to deliver to publisher Goodman.

"We were asked to develop all new characters," Everett recalled in an interview in **Steranko's History of Comics** in 1970. "Carl (Burgos) and I were quite close friends, and we usually held our story conferences very informally over a drink." They decided that they would create characters based on the opposites of fire and water. From this Burgos conceived The Human Torch.

"Then we discussed the natural opposite of fire...water. What could we do with a character and water? That was my part of it. I recalled these lines from the 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner' by Samuel Taylor Coleridge: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THREE VERSIONS OF THE SAME COVER:

The Sub-Mariner vs. The World

The inside cover at lower left was actually the first version, appearing as the cover on the first Fantastic Four annual. When the story was reprinted the first time, the cover at top left was used, and when it was reprinted in a deluxe edition, John Byrne did the third version ala Kirby!

The sun came up upon the left,
Out of the sea came he!
And he shone bright, and on the right
Went down into the sea.

"I called him the Sub-Mariner after the poem, and for the name Namor, I simply spelled 'Roman' backwards...In those days we didn't have writers unless we wanted to hire them ourselves. Almost everybody created their own features and both wrote and drew them. I was no different. I began thinking about the Sub-Mariner and his icy kingdom under Antarctica. The wings on his feet were inspired by the statue of Mercury. The concept of the Sub-Mariner came naturally to me, just like it was something that had to be told."

Everett's first Sub-Mariner story was drawn on double-tone board, which is best applied when drawing for black & white reproduction. The only time the story appeared in B&W was in the low-distribution **Motion Picture Funnies Weekly** 1. It appeared in color with four additional pages in the first issue of **Marvel Comics**.

The Human Torch 5 is considered a pivotal issue in the early days of Timely. It features the first of several Human Torch vs. The Sub-Mariner battles and was so popular when first published that it sold out completely. The concept of the battle was dreamed up by Everett and Burgos. The publisher, Martin Goodman, thought it was such a good idea that he wanted to see the book immediately. So it had to be done over one weekend. Working at Everett's apartment, he and Burgos began laying out the first pages without knowing anything more about the story than that the Torch and Namor had to have a fight. They enlisted the aid of other writer and artist friends and the story was produced a page at a time — but the job was done by Monday!

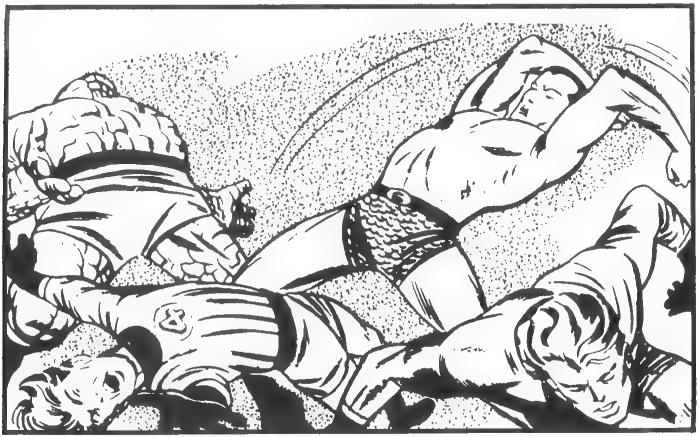
ORIGINS

Various versions of Namor's origins have been published, most only varying slightly. Probably the biggest difference between the origins is in the nature of Namor's race. Some versions have him as an offshoot of the original Atlanteans who inhabited Atlantis. But Namor himself (in **Fantastic Four Annual** 1) states that his race, Homo Mermanus, evolved independently of humankind. In 1920, when the icebreaker Oracle (described variously as other kinds of ships in earlier tellings, including as a three-masted schooner), while blasting through ice floes, accidentally causes damage to befall the undersea dwellers. Princess Fen goes alone to see what the mysterious surface creatures are like. Fen falls in love with Capt. Leonard McKenzie and they are married. But her father thinks her kidnapped and attacks the surface ship, injuring McKenzie. (The annual originally stated he was slain. This was altered when it was reprinted in **Fantastic Four Special Edition** 1, May 1984).

Fen returns to Atlantis to bear a son, Namor. A new breed of undersea man, able to easily breathe both air and water, he was possibly the first mutant of the Twentieth Century and earth's only true human amphibian. Unlike the blue-skinned Atlanteans, his epidermis is white, like his human father. He also has wings on his feet (certainly a mutation) — but how these tiny wings can enable him to fly is an untapped mystery. He also possesses a vast strength unique to him as neither of his parents had any such characteristic. Born in 1922, he appears ageless as the passing of time has had no discernable affect on his mutant body.

Namor's origin was first told in **Marvel Comics** 1 and then retold in **Sub-Mariner Comics** (the Golden Age version of the title) 32. When the book was revived in 1954, his origin was retold in 33.

Namor received his own book in the Spring of 1941. (It was titled **Sub-Mariner Comics** with 2 but just **Sub-Mariner** for the premiere). By this time, Namor was taking his anger against humanity out against the Axis powers as he ravaged the armies and navies of Germany and Japan. But when he first appeared in **Marvel Mystery** and **Human Torch**, Namor was a sworn enemy of the human race. In **Marvel Mystery** 7, for example, he expresses his anger at how he has been treated by humanity by pushing a ferryboat directly into the path of an ocean liner! That Namor was a murderer in his early days has never been addressed in the modern Marvel continuity.



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In his early stories, Namor encounters a police woman, Betty Dean, whom he comes to respect. She plays an important supporting part in the Forties and her place in his life would be remembered during his revival in the Sixties.

It is Betty Dean and the Human Torch who convince Namor that the real menace he should be battling is the rising tide of Nazism in Europe and the rising sun of Japan in the east. Although he fights as an ally of America in World War II, this would be forgotten when the war ended. At that time he chooses to battle criminals rather than humanity in general until the first run of his title expires with issue 32 in 1949.

In the first issue of the Sub-Mariner limited series in 1984, a previously unrecorded event in Namor's life is revealed — that in 1952 he attempted to join the United Nations under the banner of Atlantis. Latent racism caused a riot at the prospect and when someone attempted to shoot Namor, the bullet bounced off and killed an innocent bystander. Namor once more chose to shun humanity thereafter.

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STRANGE SUPPORTING CHARACTERS

In 1947 a female counterpart of Namor was introduced, called Namora. A distaff Namor in every way, he meets her when searching for the killers of her father. They team up and she changes her name to Namora to honor him. Although her father was an Atlantean, her mother must have been human. Her origin was never explored in the Forties.

When **The Sub-Mariner** was revived in 1954 with 33, Bill Everett was back, telling untold tales of Namor's youth. Some of these include Namora, thus showing that he had known her long before her first comic book appearance in 1947.

A strange juvenile version of Namor, called Subby, appears in **Kid Komics** numbers 1 and 2 (1943). A kid, he has all the powers of Namor except wings on his feet. His connection to the Sub-Mariner is hinted at but never revealed. He appears only in those two issues while Namor himself appears in **Kid Komics** 4.

Although the last **Sub-Mariner** comic of the Fifties appeared in 1955, the conflict which brought about Namor's amnesia occurred after that date.

Supposedly, it took place in 1957, when Namora marries an Atlantean and gives birth to a daughter, Namorita.

A man called Destiny, who was supposedly on the ship which contained Leonard McKenzie when he married Princess Fen, had originally come to the Antarctic in search of a fabled serpent crown, a powerful mystic weapon. Buried with it in the ice, the crown enables Destiny to survive and seek vengeance on McKenzie 35 years later. But when he is led to believe that McKenzie is dead, he seeks out the man's son — Namor. During the battle that ensues, Namor is injured and his people are either killed or scattered to the four corners of the undersea globe. Stricken with amnesia from a blow to the head, Namor begins to wander aimlessly until found by a new generation hero years later.

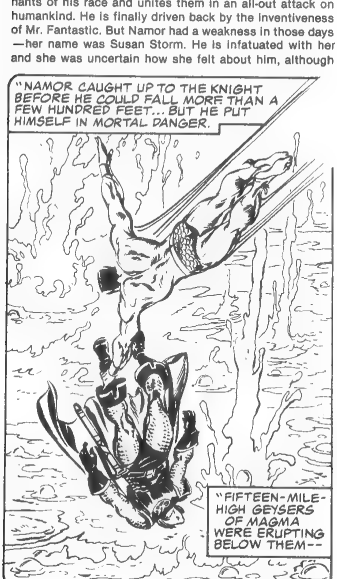
Although Captain America had a higher profile than Namor during the Golden Age of comics, it was the Sub-Mariner who edged out both Cap and the Torch for the highest number of appearances in the Golden Age. There were his 42 issues of **Sub-Mariner Comics** (which stretches the Golden Age a bit by including the early Fifties), plus 91 appearances in **Marvel Mystery Comics**; and **Human Torch** 1-33, 36-38; **All Winners** 1-19, 21 and second series number one; **All Select** 1-5, 10 and the title it metamorphosized into, **Blonde Phantom** 13-15, and 17-22. Also **Daring Comics** 9-12; **Captain America Comics** 10, 68 & 70; **Young Men** 24-28; **Men's Adventures** 27 & 28; **Namora Comics** 1-3. His story in **Kid Komics** 4 brings Namor's Golden Age appearance total to 292! (Numbers courtesy of Mike Nolan's **Timely Comics Index**).

THE SAVAGE SUB-MARINER!

In 1962, Johnny Storm (aka The Human Torch), encounters a powerful, amnesiac, bearded hobo in a Bowery flophouse. Using his concentrated flame, he removes the man's long beard,and reveals him to be the one and only Sub-Mariner. Taking him to the ocean, the Torch drops him in, immediately reviving Namor's memory. But when Namor swims home to find his city in ruins, he blames the surface world and declares a one man war on it, much as he had in 1939.

In FF 6, Namor joins up with Dr. Doom against the FF for the first supervillain team-up in Marvel comics history.

In the first FF annual, besides Namor's appearance before the U.N. (in disguise), he locates the scattered remnants of his race and unites them in an all-out attack on humankind. He is finally driven back by the inventiveness of Mr. Fantastic. But Namor had a weakness in those days —her name was Susan Storm. He is infatuated with her and she was uncertain how she felt about him, although


"NAMOR CAUGHT UP TO THE KNIGHT BEFORE HE COULD FALL MORE THAN A FEW HUNDRED FEET... BUT HE PUT HIMSELF IN MORTAL DANGER.
"FIFTEEN-MILE-HIGH GEYSERS OF MAGMA WERE ERUPTING BELOW THEM--

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.she did keep his picture around. His sensitivity for her causes him to alienate his own people after their unsuccessful raid on New York and they abandon him. It would be some months before he found them again and renounced all ties to the surface world.

In **The Avengers** 3, Namor teams up with the Hulk in a battle against the Avengers that goes pretty well until the Hulk reverts back to Bruce Banner. His rage is expended in issue four when he shatters an ice floe on which rests a block of ice containing the frozen body of Captain America. Unknowingly, Prince Namor put into motion the events which will bring about Cap's revival.

In FF 33 he teams up with the Fantastic Four against his most dangerous foe, Attuma, demonstrating that he is no longer interested in conflict against humankind.

When he is reunited with his people, he attempts to involve himself completely with his Atlantean realm. He is caught up with intrigues involving the Warlord Krang and his bethrothed, Lady Dorma. Some of these stories, from his strip in **Tales to Astonish** issues 70-101, were faithfully adapted into the Sub-Mariner cartoons which ran in syndication on many tv stations in the mid-Sixties (They are currently being released on videotape by Prism Video.)

Sub-Mariner returned to his own title with a new first issue dated May 1968. It began with some fine stories written by Roy Thomas and drawn by John Buscema. Thomas is very familiar with the Golden Age tales of Prince Namor and he made several interesting references to them such as the one in issue 9 ("In the Rage of Battle") when Namor ceases his conflict at the behest of an old woman who comes to him and asks him to grant humanity mercy, for old time's sake. This woman is Betty Dean, Namor's old friend (and possibly an old romantic interest?) from the Forties. Her appearance here was handled with quiet dignity and grace. Would that her character had been allowed to retire this way, but it was not to be. In 61 she would be turned into a Hydrobase Amphibian by the villainous Dr. Hydro.

Namor's new series lasted until issue 72 (Sept. 1974). Highlights include issue 38, written by Thomas and drawn by Ross Andru and John Severin, which features the origin of Namor and Atlantis retold one more time.

With issue 50, Bill Everett returned and stayed with it for several issues, far more than just a one-shot guest-appearance by the man who created the character. In all, in the Silver Age Everett drew issues 50-55, 57, 58, the first four pages of issue 61 and some of the stories in **Tales to Astonish**. His work had lost none of the flare he had demonstrated in the Forties and Fifties. When he died, comics lost a unique stylist. Unlike many artists, Everett consciously strove not to imitate anyone! It showed. His art was always distinctive. In the Marvel Age of Comics he also drew such landmarks as the first **Daredevil**.

In issue 37, the long time supporting character, Lady Dorma, is killed. Namor abdicates his throne in 38 and leaves Atlantis for a long time, not returning until issue 58.

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THE PAST RETURNS

In issue 44, Namor finally finds his father, Leonard McKenzie, now a broken man. We then learn about McKenzie's *second* Antarctic expedition.

Issue 50 introduces Namorita, Namora's daughter who has been raised by another after her mother, Namora, was poisoned years before. Issue 51 explains how Namora met her death. Namor never had much luck with the ladies! He then becomes involved with Namorita.

With 65, the magazine becomes **The Savage Sub-Mariner** in a bid to boost its lagging sales. In 67 Namor is given a fancy costume, ostensibly designed by Reed Richards to help the Sub-Mariner after he loses his ability to survive out of water. This costume lasts into Namor's continuing appearances in **Super-Villain Team-Up** where he once more works with Dr. Doom, but he discards it with Issue 6 and leaves the title entirely after issue 13.

After that, Namor only regularly appeared in **The Invaders**. And there in flashback untold tales of Captain America, Namor and the original Human Torch fighting side-by-side in WWII. That book too was cancelled. For a brief time Namor appeared regularly as one of **The Avengers**. One bright spot was in 1984 when he had a well done four-issue miniseries. It concludes with Prince Namor being forced to abdicate.

The Sub-Mariner is currently involved with Marina, formerly of Alpha Flight, who has become a bizarre creature. The storyline involving her and Namor will climax in the upcoming Alpha Flight graphic novel. Then the Sub-Mariner will probably return to **The Avengers** since he retains his membership. **CF**

TWO LOVES OF SUBBY—
ABOVE, CURRENT FLAME MARINA;
BELOW, THE INVISIBLE GIRL, NOW
MARRIED TO REED RICHARDS!

JAMES VAN HISE is the former editor of one of the oldest fanzines in the comic book field author of **The Art of Al Williamson** and editor of **Monsterland**

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A REAL AMERICAN HERO

BY JAMES VAN HISE

If someone had asked me to name the best-selling comic book, **The X-Men** would have been the quick answer. But there's a comic which sells better than **The X-Men**. That book is **G.I. Joe**, and the man who has been the guiding force behind the characters since the very first issue is writer Larry Hama. Now there are no less than four G.I. Joe-related books.

A tie-in with Hasbro's toy series, **G.I. Joe** is a far cry from the basic soldier toys of twenty years ago. The modern G.I. Joe is a team of commandoes, some straightforward soldiers, some more unusual than that, such as Snake-Eyes, a Vietnam vet whose face was hideously scarred in the war and who wears masks to cover the damage. The team battles such bizarre foes as Destro and Serpentor. And all of these characters have had life breathed into them by writer Hama.

"I created all the characters," says Hama. "I write all of the dossiers — the material on the back of the toy packages. **The G.I. Joe Order of Battle** (a handbook and guide to the many characters in the series) is basically what's on the toy package. That's what I do for Hasbro, and we use the characters. There's over a hundred characters. A few dolls exist because we did the character first when we needed a specific type of character in a plotline and it became popular enough that they decided to make a doll out of it, like The Baroness."

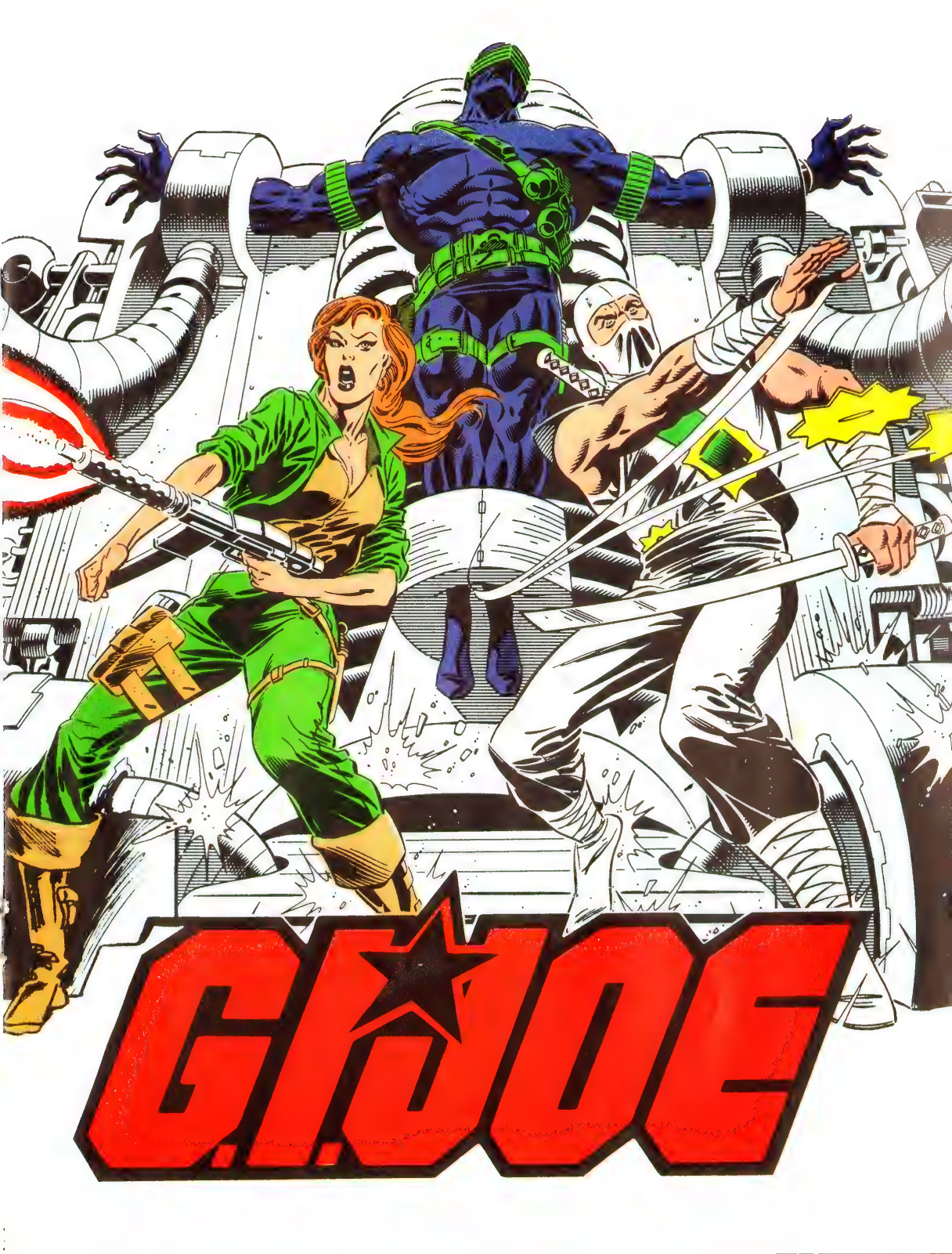
Thus far, **G.I. Joe** is the only comic book which is advertised on television, normally during the **G.I. Joe** cartoon show. "That's all done by Hasbro," Hama explains. "They do commercials for between two and four specific issues a year."

While the huge popularity of **G.I. Joe** could be tied to the existence of the cartoon show and the commercials on it for the comic, other cartoons have comics based on them. And they are not nearly as popular, nor do they retain their popularity as long as **G.I. Joe** has.

"The toy and tv tie-in probably have a lot to do with it, but there's other factors that you have to take into consideration," Hama states. "The comic reaches a market that's a little bit different than the regular superhero market. That demonstrates that there is a big potential market out there. There are people who want to read other things than the superheroes." The huge success which Doug Murray and Michael Golden's **The Nam** enjoys further bears this out.

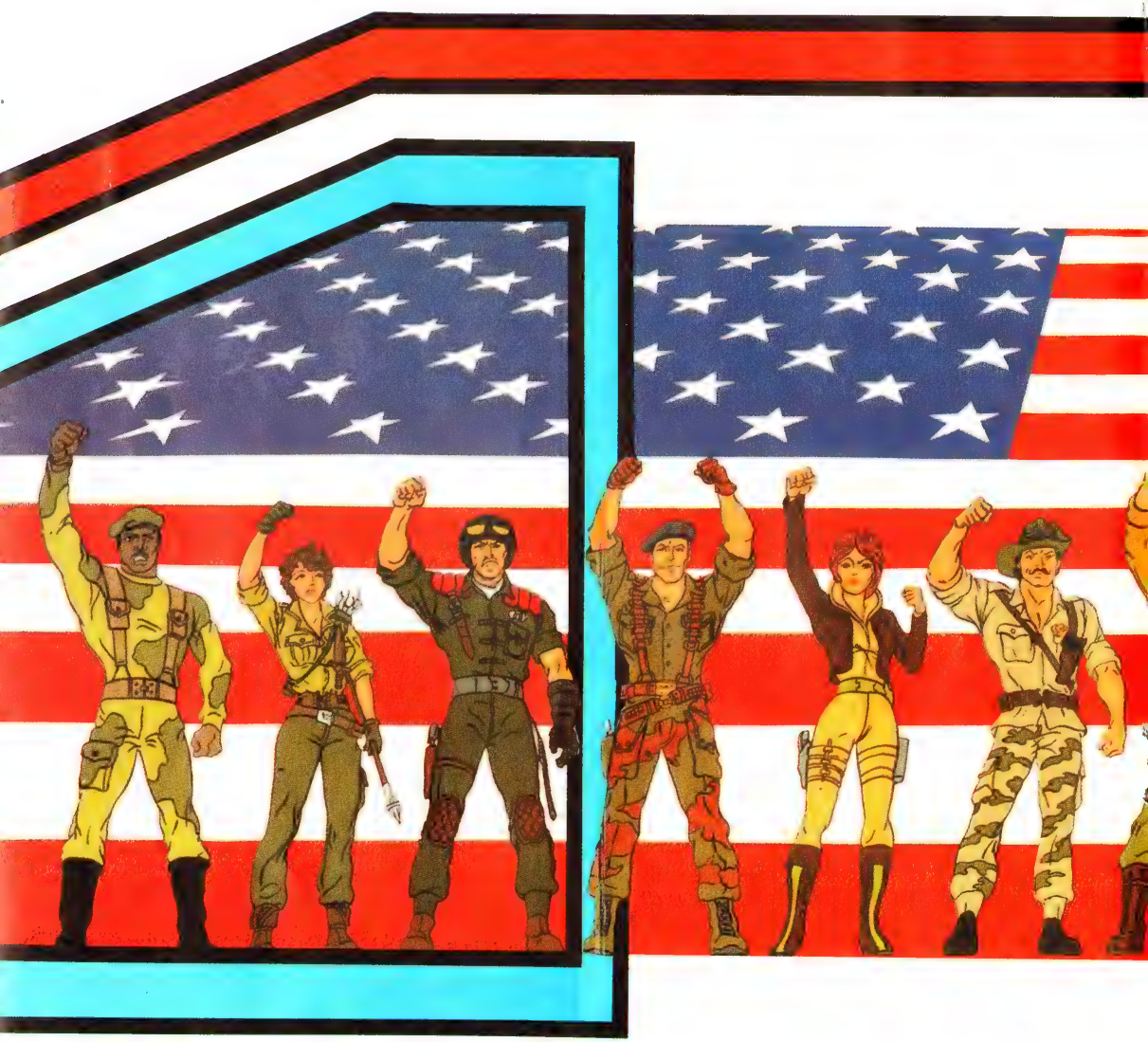
Another factor of measuring the popularity of a comic is just how enthusiastic its readers are about it. This can readily be determined by how many of its fans take the time to sit down and write letters to the book.

"**G.I. Joe** gets between twelve hundred to eighteen hundred letters a week," Hama reveals. "At one point it was getting more mail than all the other Marvel books put together. That's a lot of kids writing in. I get lots of letters from people who are in their teens as well as from people in the military. In the last six to eight months there has been a tremendous rise in the percentage of girls writing in, so it's difficult to say just who reads it. I suspect that the basic readership is in the ten to eleven-year-old boy range, but it spreads out considerably."

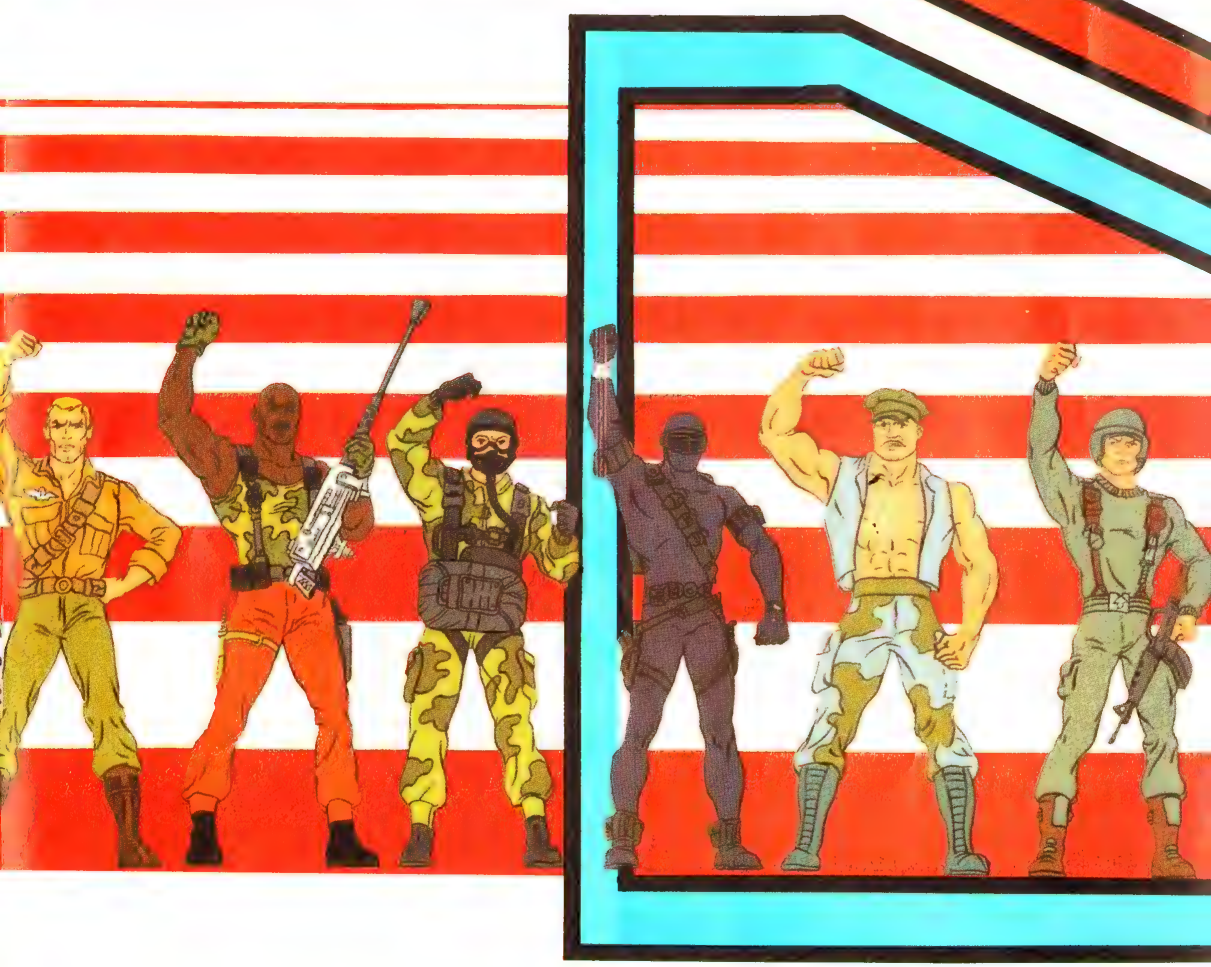

G.I.JOE

G.I. JOE

A REAL AMERICAN HERO!



G.I. JOE



SPIN OFFS

Another popular Hasbro toy which became a comic is **The Transformers**. It could almost be considered inevitable that there would be a team-up between the two seemingly disparate groups. That's just what is happening in the four issue limited series **G.I. Joe and the Transformers**. While guarding a solar/nuclear power station (whatever that is), the ark of the Autobots (which has crashed on Earth) sends a scout to investigate whether the evil Decepticons have discovered this uniquely powerful generator and are planning to hijack it for their criminal purposes. It turns out that they are, but since the Autobots and the Decepticons are viewed by most as being just one group ("all robots look alike to me..."), one of the Autobots falls when the G.I. Joe Team blasts it but good. Needless to say, the good guys will have to learn how to tell a good Transformer from an evil one.

That limited series is written by Michael Higgins and co-edited by the editors of the **G.I. Joe** and **Transformers** series, Bob Harras and Don Daley. While the editors make sure that nothing interferes with the continuity of the two series, Larry Hama has his hands full just maintaining the continuity of the regular **G.I. Joe** strips.

"I haven't really seen anything of it," Hama admits. "It's not really a universe I'm particularly interested in. I don't keep track of everything else that's going on with G.I. Joe. I completely ignore what's happening in the animated series, otherwise I would have to spend an hour a day looking at cartoons, and I just don't have the time to do that. It's hard enough just keeping my own little **G.I. Joe** universe as straight as possible and as consistent as possible. Consistency is a big factor in the popularity of anything."

But if **G.I. Joe and the Transformers** limited series is just a temporary tie-in title, **G.I. Joe Special Missions** is a new bi-monthly. The comic features the G.I. Joe team in more down-to-earth missions than the super-scietific happenings in the regular title.

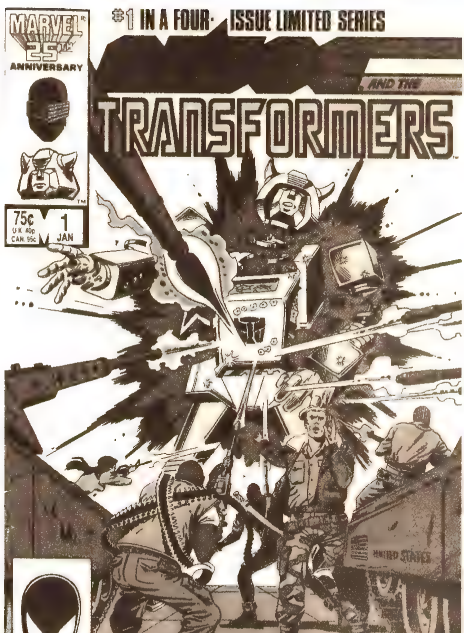
"The title came into being because they wanted to do another **G.I. Joe** title and I wanted to do a title that I could keep a little more realistic in approach and style; have a little bit less involved with science fiction," Hama explains regarding the origins of this new spinoff.

"**Special Missions** is a book where all of the missions are separate and self-contained. There's not really a continuity from issue to issue so I don't think of those as being in any specific order," Hama adds. When writing this series, Hama says, "I just try to come up with a really difficult mission, objective or problem and take a specific type

of team to handle it. Then I unravel the problem logically and dramatically."

Hama takes the same approach with the regular monthly **G.I. Joe** comic — he doesn't plan out lengthy, convoluted storylines many issues in advance the way some writers do.

"In fact, I don't know what's going to happen in an issue until I get to the end. In most cases I set up a situation and try to get my characters out of it. I see what they're going to do within the situation while staying within the boundaries of the characters, figuring out how that character would react in that situation by playing it out. I find that if I don't know how the story ends, then if I can surprise myself, I can surprise the reader. Otherwise, if you know exactly how it ends ahead of time, then the writer is just manipulating the characters toward that end. Usually the reader can figure it out as well."



MAKING IT REAL

The artist behind the realistic feel of **G.I. Joe Special Missions** is long-time Marvel veteran Herb Trimpe.

In his twenty years at Marvel Comics, Trimpe has largely drawn superheroes, particularly The Hulk. But recently, he has demonstrated an affinity for more down-to-earth fables.

"I'm just finishing up issue 4 right now. Counting the supplement which appeared in **G.I. Joe** #50, that makes a total of five stories," Trimpe explains. "I'm waiting for them to go monthly. They could probably put out a couple more **G.I. Joe** books, but not everyone's interested in drawing them because they're perceived as being somewhat limited subject matter. And unless you commit the characters to memory, it takes a lot of reference."

Just how many characters are there in the **G.I. Joe** series?

"Boy, I don't know," Trimpe admits. "I just did characters for the **G.I. Joe Universe** and I lost count after sixty-five. I was still getting material from the editor every once in awhile, so there were several more tacked on after that. I have a pretty complete reference on it but every once in awhile I have to call up the office because no matter how many of the character model sheets I seem to have, Larry Hama will manage to come up with something I don't have a reference for. So there's at least 65 characters, and that includes the Cobras and the **G.I. Joe** people."

But **Special Missions** is not Trimpe's first foray with the Joe team as he was the original artist on the regular series. "I did the first few issues, until number 8."

Trimpe is used to doing research for a book in order to draw a lot of different characters. You see, he also drew all of Marvel's Shogun Warriors.

"That was sort of the predecessor to **Transformers**," he explains. "It seemed like the Shogun Warriors were just an endless series of shapes and forms that were almost impossible to get right, but after three issues I had those robots memorized and I had to work at the reference again. It's the same with **G.I. Joe** — you have to either thumb through reference or you have to memorize it, although with the Joe's there's a lot of characters and weapons to keep up with. The original character sheets are from Hasbro. They serve as models for the artists although you can deviate from it. It depends on what the circumstances are because some of those weapons are hard to keep up with."

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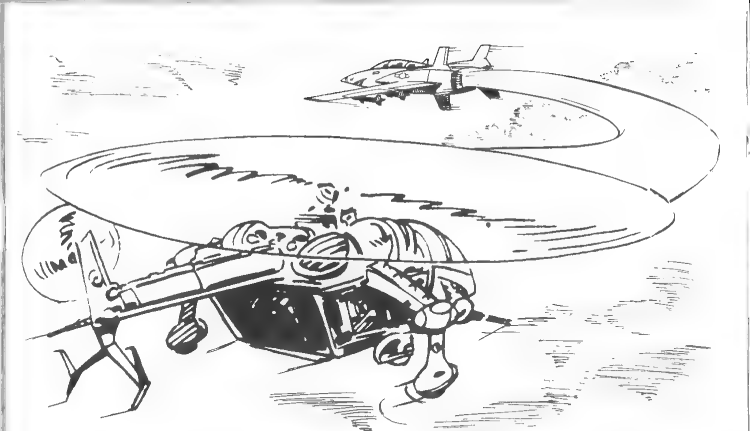
G.I. JOE
ZECK



THE EARLY DAYS

Herb Trimpe attended art school in 1958 and '59 and when he got out, he went to work for one of his instructors, Tom Gill. "He was working for Gold Key, drawing the **Lone Ranger** and books like that and I inked for him for almost two years. Then I went into the Air Force. I was in Vietnam the year after Lyndon Johnson was elected on his platform of not escalating the war. The first thing he did when he got back in was to escalate the war. They had an experimental air mobile division at Ft. Bennings called the First Cavalry Division. When Johnson started sending divisions over there wholesale, we were attached to the First Cavalry and they wanted to see how this concept worked under actual conditions, so we went over as a detachment under their supervision. But I wasn't in the Army — I was in the Air Force."

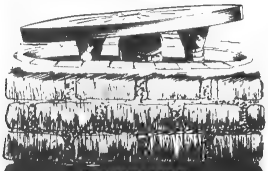
That was when Trimpe saw his first Marvel Comic. "A guy got in a bunch of comics and I remember reading an issue of **Thor**. I didn't know one artist from the other at that time, but I remember that it was Colletta's inking. I remember that because when I finally started doing comics after that, I realized that it was a Kirby/Colletta Thor that I'd read. When I read it I thought, great! This is tremendous! I'd never read anything like that. It had some adult ideas in it and it was probably the first comic I'd read in ten years."

When he was younger, Trimpe's favorite comics had been the E.C.'s — as well as such Disney comics as Donald Duck. "When I read superheroes, it was Plastic Man and Captain Marvel. I never had a comics collection, but I had a cousin who had a tremendous collection. I used to go over to his house for lunch in junior high school and read those comics. I loved Plastic Man and Captain Marvel."

Trimpe had gone to art school with "Big" John Verpoorten, who became Production Manager at Marvel. "When I got out of the Air Force, I went over to Marvel, talked to Sol Brodsky and started inking up there. I ran the stat machine before I started to pencil the Hulk. This was in 1966 when Stan Lee was still writing and monitoring all the books and Roy Thomas was his assistant.

"I think that I was one of the last guys to work one-on-one with Stan," Trimpe states. While he likes the writer/artist relationships he works in now, he admits that it was a little different then. "Mind you, they were doing a lot less books than they're doing now. They were probably doing under 20 titles. I remember sitting down with Roy and in 15 minutes we'd talk over the plot and that was it. I'd jot down a few notes and pencil it from there. There was no typewritten plot or anything. Thank God it's still not to the point where we have to work from full script — getting away from working with full script is the best thing that's ever been invented! This is because the artist is the one who really carries the action and even if the writer happens to be an artist, you still can't figure all the angles when you're typing up a script and working out a story. If you have a rough idea of the plot to work with to tell the story it allows a whole lot more freedom to think on your feet as you go along and draw it. In all the years I drew **The Hulk**, I rarely worked from a written script. Now it's not uncommon to get a plot that's 12-14 typed pages long — for one 22 page story. It's almost as restrictive in intent as a script can be, except that you're still encouraged to add things that happen to come to mind."

A feeling of genuine danger...



THE FREEDOM TO DRAW

"When I first started working at Marvel," Trimpe continues, we were the second company. We put out fewer magazines and just didn't have as dynamic or as large an organization. But I think that one of the prime things that contributed to us becoming the way we are is the way that the writer and the artist worked because it let a lot of creative juices flow. That is one of the things about a discussed plot where you just take notes and hash it out. As you draw it, you can ass and stretch where it's necessary. In the end you actually save time and it works out better actionwise."

"Some of the brilliant things that Jack Kirby used to do were just tremendous. You'd never get them working from a script in a million years. While Stan was the key to the literary stuff, who would get in there and act things out — improve things — Kirby would add bits and pieces. That was one of the things that contributed to what brought Marvel up."

Trimpe feels that certain artists have influenced his style, both before and after he joined Marvel in the Sixties.

"One of the guys whose work I always liked was Jack Davis, but when I went to work for Marvel, that style didn't go," the artist recalls. "The style had to be the superhero mode of drawing and Jack Kirby was held up as a classic example. Kirby's still my favorite guy in the business as far as what he did and what he contributed to the form in the whole history of his work as well as to the industry as a whole. Before I started working at Marvel I liked Jack Davis, and then when I got up there it was Kirby's stuff that I admired."

It was while at Marvel that Trimpe collaborated with another artist he'd long admired — John Severin.

"John's great — tremendous! He was one of my favorite guys when I was reading E.C. With John Severin, it almost doesn't matter who pencils it — you know what you're going to get when it's done."

In the twenty years that Trimpe has been at Marvel, he feels a different approach was adopted towards artists.

"One of the great things that changed in recent years is that there was a tremendous increase in freedom of style. There are guys drawing comics now that never would have been accepted back in the early Seventies. Styles are much more varied, like Bill Sienkiewicz. He's tremendous and is one of my favorites today, but I don't think that his style would have been accepted by Marvel or DC back in the early Seventies. That's the major change that's taken place in the last few years—the freedom of creative style. It's much more varied now, and it pretty much coincided with Shooter as editor."

SPECIAL MISSIONS

Having the freedom to break down plots and interpret them visually, Trimpe's position is aided when he works with Larry Hama, who is also an artist.

"For instance, right now I'm working from Larry's plot on **Special Missions** and he has the unique ability to write the plot and break it down into pages — Page one: This is what happens, etc. Nine times out of ten he is spot on. It's just enough for the page — you don't have to cram or squeeze things into a page or, worse, at the end of a story. It's very clear, very concise and there's no confusion. He's one of the clearest thinking plot writers I've ever run across. But it's based on the experience of the writer.

"I've gotten plots from other writers that are really two issues of story, and sometimes I've been told to do the best I can. Other times I had to make changes because of deadlines. But I can pretty much tell, now, what the meat of the thing is. The worst combination is when somebody writes an overly long plot and has it broken down into pages. It's agonizing to go through it on a page-by-page basis and see that every page will contain 8 or 10 panels. I don't like to edit as I go along because once a plot is approved it's almost impossible to go over it again and make major changes.

"Larry gives me the plot and it's a paragraph for each page. It's very general but it's clear. Having worked at it for awhile, it's very convenient to have somebody who knows how to take the story from the artist's point of view from the outset. You don't have to shift the action too much."

Issue three of **Special Missions** dealt with a raid on a terrorist nation, but the purpose of the raid was also to steal something.

"When the story was done, I asked Larry, 'Why would the U.S. want to steal electronic devices from a Soviet airplane in a Third World nation when the Russians get their technology from us! We're the leader in electronic development, not only in space but for everyday Earth things. What could they have that we need?' It's a good story, though," Trimpe observes.

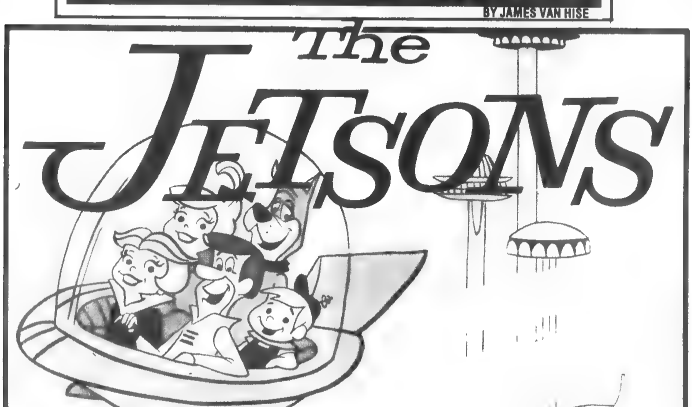
The fourth issue is more like the regular **G.I. Joe** book in that it's a confrontation with Cobra in a race to reach a crashed aircraft in southeast Asia. "It's sort of like **Raiders of the Lost Ark**," the artist states.

The stories in each issue of **Special Missions** have been self-contained and the series will remain that way as long as the title remains bi-monthly. "But as soon as they go monthly, they may start changing that to a double-issue story with a slight cliffhanger," Trimpe predicts.

With the huge popularity of both regular comic books, the team-up with the Transformers, the digest and the **Order of Battle**, that prediction may actualize real soon! **CF**

Animated Antics

BY JAMES VAN HISE



In the future there will be...sitcoms! That's what **The Jetsons** purveyed as its comedic view of the future when it premiered in 1962.

In 1984, **The Jetsons** returned, this time to syndication with 41 new episodes. Bob Hathcock came in as producer, replacing Alex Lovey, a man who has worked in animation for many years and whose career dates back to the early days of Walter Lantz. While Hathcock is not exactly an old-timer, he has been in animation for 19 years.

"At the time they asked me to produce **The Jetsons** new segments, I was already producing **The Smurfs**," Hathcock recalls. "Art Baldwin was Supervising Producer on **The Smurfs** and I'd been doing that show regularly for about four years. So my job on **The Jetsons** overlapped on **The Smurfs** and another show, **Yogi's Treasure Hunt**. I started on it in September '84 and there were already a few in different stages of production. I think that we finished all 41 new ones by September of the next year."

Originally Hanna-Barbera made 24 episodes of **The Jetsons** and it wasn't a ratings success. "I think it ran opposite **Disney's Wonderful World Of Color** and **Dennis The Menace** or something which was very popular at the time. So everybody's memory of **The Jetsons** was based on 24 episodes," Hathcock states.

MEET THE JETSONS

Following on the heels of the more popular **Flintstones, The Jetsons** reworked the basic formula so that instead of a working class family in the past, it was a middle class family of the far future.

"While **The Flintstones** seems to have been a takeoff on **The Honeymooners, The Jetsons** was probably based more on **Blondie**," Hathcock observes. "George Jetson is kind of lazy and when he comes home all he wants to do is lie down while the rest of the household comes down on him with all these hassles. The actress who did Jane, Penny Singleton, was the original Blondie in the movies and we reused the original **Jetsons** cast when we did the new episodes in 1984.

"Elroy is Dawes Butler and Astro is Don Messick, who does a lot of things like Scooby Doo. Maybe Astro was a predecessor of Scooby Doo?" Hathcock wonders, since both dogs "talk" in the same fashion.

"Janet Waldo played Judy and we still use her in shows like **The Smurfs**.

"George O'Hanlon had not been working much since so we brought him back out of retirement to recreate George Jetson and it worked out real well. Sometimes we had to record him separately because he can't read well due to eye trouble — we have to give him the lines. But he was great," Hathcock states. O'Hanlon's dialogue had to be sped up slightly in order for the cadence to perfectly match the George Jetson of the original 24 episodes.

"Jean Vanderpile, who does Rosie, the household robot, was also Wilma in **The Flintstones**," Hathcock continues. "So we had all these great folks and they were happy to get back together again because they hadn't done the show in 22 years!

"My father, by the way, animated on the original **Jetsons**," Hathcock reveals. "He was an animator who worked at Disney for 17 years and at Hanna-Barbera from 1960-76. He's retired now. So I had a connection with the original show in that respect. I had been very familiar with it when I was a high school kid when it was first being made."

THE WAY THE FUTURE WAS

"Joe Barbera was always very fond of the show," Hathcock reveals when discussing one of the reasons for its revival, "it was one of his favorites. It's done well through the years in syndication. That is where most people remember the series from. There's a kind of cultish following that exists today, mostly among young people in high school and college that like the look, the nostalgia look of the Fifties. I think it's called the International Style — the look with all the boomerang shapes.

"The interesting thing about **The Jetsons** is that the stylization seemed to create a following and that was the built-in audience for the syndication this time. I don't know whether it reached them because the show was usually aired early in the morning or three o'clock in the afternoon and I don't know whether that really hit its intended audience. But if you go down to the hip stores you see **Jetsons** tee-shirts and stuff like that for sale. So I was getting a lot of interest when people heard that new episodes were being done. I did interviews for computer radio shows in Detroit and television interviews and I'd never really had that kind of experience before. In producing animated shows, usually no one knows that you're doing them until they come out, but **The Jetsons** had a lot of early interest."

There were certain patterns and approaches which had to be followed in order to come up with stories which would both fit in with the previously existing episodes and take advantage of the ideas that the series established for itself.

"What made **The Jetsons** popular was basically three or four things," Hathcock explains. One was the stylization, which he'd already described. "Another was the music, which was very popular." Even today, rock stations occasionaly play the jazzy theme song. "Plus the fact that as a sitcom it had some good characters."

But the view of the future as provided in **The Jetsons** differs somewhat with how people view the future now, not to mention the fact that what was futuristic in 1962 has in some cases become contemporary in 1986.

"In the early Sixties, everybody's outlook was very hopeful but today our attitude isn't quite the same. We went through a period where we got kind of cynical about some of our moves forward because people started becoming aware of pollution and overpopulation and a lot of the negatives caused from technology. But I think that now maybe we're moving into a new era of looking forward again.

"Plus, back in the early Sixties, the things that were prophesized in **The Jetsons** — moving sidewalks, low hour jobs, wrist radios — a lot of those things have come to be. So in 1984 when I did the new shows, a lot of these things were common to us. A lot of airports have sidewalks. We have robots helping us in industry and possibly in the home soon. So a lot of the science fiction things of the future are different from what was perceived they'd be looking forward from 1962."

The basic ideas underneath the framework did not change, though, so the approach to the new stories was the same approach used in 1962.

"We tried to keep them sitcoms because that's the way I think the show is," says Hathcock. "It works best that way. It's basically all sitcom stories, so they were mostly the same in that respect. The thing that I was trying to accomplish was to deliver basically the same kinds of shows, the same feeling of the show, while trying to update some of the machinery.

"The thing that's funny in the show is that even though they live in this super high tech future world, their problems are the same that people have today. We still have the problems of adolescents' relationships with their parents, a worker's relationship with his boss, a man and his wife, a dog and a precocious boy — all that kind of thing. Those things are plugged into that future world except that you have robots and computers which talk back to you — they have identities." Thus a robot checker at the supermarket can be just as friendly, or just as ascerbic, as

Beef Stroganoff
IRISH STEW
PRIME RIB
FRIED CHICKEN
PIZZA
HAMBURGER
FLYING PIZZA
POTATOES
TOMATOES
SQUASH
CARROTS
PEAS
CORN
ASPARAGUS
BROCCOLI
SPINACH
Desserts

THE JETSONS: BUMSTEADS OF THE FUTURE?

the supermarket help of today.

"We might be going beyond certain things in technology," Hathcock adds, "but we still have the same problems. The computers go on strike. The robots go on strike. That kind of thing."

Not every episode slavishly followed the style and format of what had gone before, though. They tried a couple different things with stories that strayed from science fiction into fantasy.

"We did a story where Elroy bumps his head and it's almost a **Wizard of Oz** kind of situation where he goes into this whole dreamworld that's inhabited by ancient tools. To them, hammers and wrenches were ancient tools. But most of them were the kinds of shows which would have been done originally. We did try to add some new machines."

And also a new character named Orbity that Elroy finds.

"Elroy finds a rock and the rock hatches and he gets a little fuzzy character that has spring legs, a mechanical aptitude and is kind of cute."

Hathcock explains that it was done to add another dimension to the show although possible merchandising considerations may have had some impact as well.

"It was just another character that worked out well and it was cute so we kept him in the show. The story was written where Elroy goes out to a planet on a field trip and he brings the rock back. It hatches and they have a whole adventure around that. It just came out in somebody's story and we kept it."

Other than that, the cast of **The Jetsons** remained unchanged. What didn't remain unchanged were the animation techniques applied to the show. The new ones are about the future as they encompass the latest thing in computers.

PAINTING VIA COMPUTER

There's some differences between the way film animation was done in the early Sixties and the way it's done now. That a show about a high tech future (however improbable) should use high tech animation techniques is rather appropriate.

"In those days," Hathcock explains, "animation was inked on cels. The drawings were traced by an inker with a pen or a brush into an acetate cel. Then the backs were painted and shot on film. Since then, all traditional animation has gone to Xerox where they use a Xerography process to transfer the drawing on to the acetate cel. Then it's painted the same way."

But most of the 41 new episodes of **The Jetsons** were done using a new computer process.

They were still animated with pencil, but instead of having cels, we have a computer process here at Hanna-Barbera where the drawings are scanned into a memory," Hathcock reveals. "Then they're drawn up on a computer terminal and they're flooded, or opaqued. This is when you make an outline, pick a color with a cursor and you press it in the center and it floods out and fills up the space contained by line information. That's the way these were colored. The background is scanned into the memory. Then all of the mechanics, the levels and production of the animation is done by computer so that a person can opaque a thousand drawings a day where in the traditional painting method they would have been able to do 60 a day if they're fast."

There's also some things that can be done with this computer process that couldn't have been done in animation before. This involves piling one cel on top of another, a task heretofore very limited.

"You can use an infinite amount of levels of drawings whereas with the old acetate cells you can only shoot through six of them before it becomes too gray and you can't see the background. There are also some video techniques that you can put in."

Because of this technique, the episodes done in this

fashion never go on film but exist only on video.

"There's not any cels," Hathcock adds. "We do about 4-5000 feet a week this way, but sometimes when the studio's at its peak we're producing more like 17,000 feet a week." Most animation is still done the traditional way because there's only so much computer time available.

"Right now **The Smurfs** take up all the computer time so the other shows we're doing this year like **Flintstone Kids, Wildfire** and **Jonny Quest** are done using the traditional animation process."

Other production companies, such as Marvel Productions, Filmation and Disney, still do traditional animation using film.

"There's a potential for accomplishing things that can't be accomplished in traditional animation, but at this point it's still new and we're using it to duplicate the same process that is done by hand. Once all that gets down to where it's efficient, then we'll start using more of the capabilities of the computer. Right now we already do it in terms of things like wipes and tricky video effects like blocking, where everything goes into big squares. And theoretically you can take a drawing from a zero field to a 1200 field." By this he means that one drawing of a spaceship can come at you from infinity right up until it fills the screen and only a portion of it can be seen. "There's technical problems with that as far as losing line information, but it'll all eventually be solved. So it has a lot of potential.

"I can still see the difference when I look at shows as to whether one is produced on film or computer," Hathcock admits, "but it's getting to the point where they're pretty much able to duplicate the same look."

AT 65 AND HOLDING

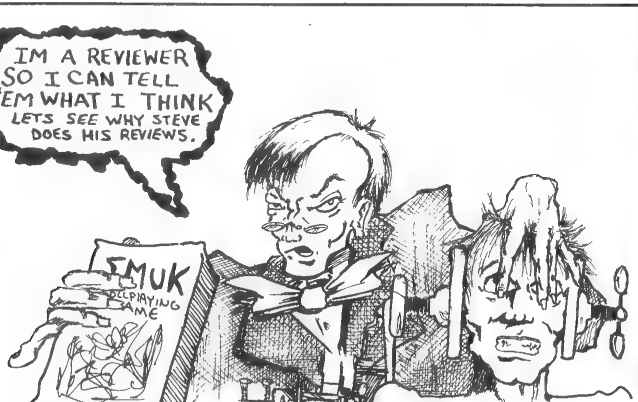
The present syndicated package of 65 episodes of **The Jetsons** is probably where it will hold.

"There's not another buy of episodes that I know of, and I think it did as well as expected," the producer states. "But I was disappointed that it didn't do better. I think the biggest reason is just that the time slots weren't available. The slots available were when little kids and housewives were watching who have none of the hook from the nostalgia part of it. I hate to say that, but that's really who's watching television at those times of day (early morning and early afternoon). It seems to me that it would have been better at dinnertime — 6 o'clock or something like that."

But **The Jetsons** are still out there, assuring us that the future is safe for comedy. **CF**

Games

BY STEVE PERRIN



WHY I DO REVIEWS

I don't think I've ever strictly outlined why I do game reviews as part of this exercise in general bombasticity.

The main purpose of this column, as I see it, is to introduce potential gamers to what's available in the industry. This is blatantly self-serving, I write game products. If you start buying games at my recommendation, then perhaps you will buy my games. Even if you don't, you support the industry in general, and they help support me. If this has, indeed, come to pass with anyone reading this column, thank you.

I introduce you to gaming in many different ways. I remark on the general themes of games currently available, I provide you with mini-games to play, I try to support your gamemastering with scenario ideas, I offer to answer any questions you have (No one has taken me up on this one, but the service is available at any time), I interview movers and shakers in the game industry, I repeat newsflashes about what's coming up from various publishers and I review what's on the racks at the moment.

Usually, I concentrate on games and their supplements with direct tie-ins to the comics. This seems only reasonable in a comics-based publication. Sometimes I go a bit farther afield in order to give you an idea of what else is available. I have found that comics fans are generally interested in other adventure mediums, and games attempt to encompass all of these mediums.

One nice thing about my game reviews is that game products usually stay on the store shelves a lot longer than, for instance, comic books. Even if I review a year old game, you can still probably find it with very little searching. Even better, games rarely go up in price for being old.

I am known as a "friendly reviewer." Constant readers of this column know that I do point out total bummers, but I don't go out of my way to find fault. I'm not giving you a hard sell, but I look at game products to see if they are useful to me, or *could* be useful to me if I played the sort of game the product is meant for. I "look for the good and praise it," to use one of the better (and least followed) phrases of the born-again. If I can't find anything to praise in a product, I strongly urge you not to buy it.

So that's why I do reviews. Do you want to see reviews? Do you want more essays? More mini-games? More interviews? Less me in general? Is anybody reading this? Let me know.

Given all of the above, let's see what's come over the transom the last few months.

THE DNAGENTS ARE LOOSE

One of the first news items I reported in this column, some two years ago, was that Fantasy Games Unlimited had the rights to issue a **Villains and Vigilante** sourcebook for Eclipse's **DNAgents**. Now, it's out.

This 48-page book actually has 42 pages of DNAgents information. There is also an ad for back issues of various Eclipse comics (now all washed away in the Gureneville Flood), a blank page and four pages devoted to the authorized translations of V&V stats to **Champions** and my own **Superworld**. This provides a bonus to players of those fine games — all this nice DNAgents info ready to use.

Considering how little of the book is taken up in strictly V&V information, it's a Very Good Deal.

Artwork is primarily by original artist and co-creator Will Meugniot. Various special illustrations, mostly of people and creatures introduced after Meugniot left the book, are done by others associated with the book: Willie Blyberg, Rich Hoberg and Richard Howell. Writer and co-creator Mark Evanier is directly represented only by an introduction in which he praises game author Jack Herman to the skies and confesses his ineptitude with anything more complex than "Chutes and Ladders." Of course, his creative work is in evidence throughout the book, as Herman is only translating what Evanier and Meugniot did into gaming terms.

Jack has done an amazing bit of work in doing that translating, however. He teamed up with V&V co-author Jeff Dee to develop a comprehensive series of diagrams and explanations for the gigantic robot Mega-Man, which was a feature of many of the early DNAgents yarns.

The last time I reviewed a similar licensed product, it was the Palladium **Justice Machine** supplement for their **Heroes Unlimited** game. I liked that supplement and one of the reasons was that it explained a lot of what had been going on in the Justice Machine comic book, information lost with the cancellation of the series. (Note to followers of the new Comico version of the Justice Machine: I'm talking about the original version — issued by Noble Comics.) The **DNAgents** Sourcebook does not have this advantage. In fact, it is based on information that is somewhat old and incomplete. There is no information here, for instance, on Rainbow's transfusion to Crossfire's circulatory system, making Crossfire an "honorary" DNAgent.

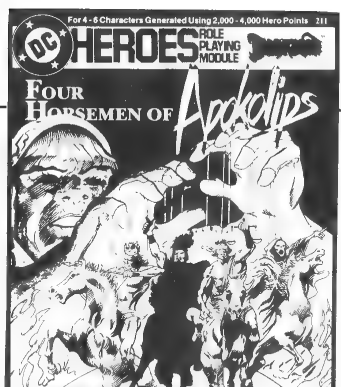
In fact, the book claims to have full details for everything that appeared in the first 20 issues of **DNAgents** (that's the first, Baxter paper, series), the first ten issues of **Crossfire**, and the **Surge** mini-series. Aside from not documenting the Crossfire transfusion, it does that pretty well.

Also included is a slightly reworked version of the "Black Box" storyline featured in **DNAgents** 11 and 12 to use as an adventure, and a full layout of the Commander's headquarters in Buran, just ready for an assault by intrepid DNAgents or other superpowered folk.

Character writeups include the Agents, Crossfire and most of the unique nasties found in **DNAgents**, **Crossfire** and **Surge**. As you might expect, hardly any of the others have any kind of super powers, except for such luminaries as Lancer, Cadaver and the Positron/Electron combination.

This is a good, workmanlike, job and a definite must-have for gamers who are also DNAgents fans. Other gamers should give it a good lookat, there's a lot of interesting information that could spruce up a campaign.

YOUR NEW DC HEROES MODULE CAN GET YOU INTO S.T.A.R. LABS AND OTHER NEAT PLACES!



COUNTDOWN TO ARMAGEDDON

There you are, flying over Metropolis, when the world falls apart. What do you do?

This is effectively the problem confronting one player playing Superman as he has to face a plot by Brainiac to turn all the electronics of Earth into cybernetic monsters which will kill all the weak flesh things and provide the blueprints for Brainiac's eventual takeover of the galaxy.

The scenario is an exercise in nostalgia for any faithful Superman reader of the pre-John Byrne period. Morgan Edge, Clark Kent as broadcaster/reporter, WGBS, the Fortress of Solitude — they're all here.

Dan Greenberg provides a rarity, a one-on-one roleplaying scenario needing just a gamemaster and a player. It's a good relief from the usual mob scene in a roleplaying game.

Putting aside its datedness and lack of usefulness for your usual gathering of a dozen avid gamers ready to play, this scenario has many good things going for it. For one, it gives better detailing of the **DC Heroes** game system, which can prove very dense for gamers trying to penetrate its surface simplicity.

For another, it provides a nice escalation of problems, starting with a potential train wreck (complicated by the fact that Clark Kent is on the train), to a bursting dam in Japan, to a burning oilfield in Saudi Arabia, to the threat of nuclear holocaust. Eventually Superman will (or should) solve the problem and discover its source, Brainiac.

The final confrontation is also well orchestrated, with a death trap it takes some clever thinking to get out of.

Another recommendation, especially for fans of the pre-Byrne Superman, I don't think the current version could handle this one..,

THE FOUR HORSEMEN CAME RIDING

Four Horsemen of Apokolips is another **DC Heroes** module, featuring the villainy of Darkseid — star of tv, toys and the **Super Powers** comic book. Author Troy Denning obviously felt it was time to return to the thrilling days of yesteryear, when Darkseid was Jack Kirby's creation alone and truly a power capable of handling anything the heroes of Earth could think of to stop him.

This book introduces a new power called "Continuum Control" which is roughly equivalent to the Power cosmic in the Marvel Comics. It effectively allows the user to do almost anything a number of other powers can do *at the same time* (normally forbidden in the rules), as long as the total APs of the powers do not exceed the total APs of Continuum Control available. It's an awesome power. Darkseid has APS of 60 with the power. For contrast, Superman has a Strength of 50 under the rules of the game, and that's the old-style, pre-Byrne Superman.

This power turns Darkseid from a medium-level toughie (capable of taking on the Martian Manhunter one-to-one), into a mega-menace probably capable of laughing uproariously in the Spectre's face. It's amazing what one little power can do...

Darkseid's plot is convoluted, as all masterplots by megamenaces should be. It involves a Book of Power which goes from one owner to the next, converting each into an avatar of one of the Four Horsemen of the Apokolips. Where the previous module ended with the threat of nuclear armageddon, this adventure starts with it. Someone has kidnapped the leaders of the USA, the USSR, Israel, Syria, South Africa and Botswana, and left clues pointing to their antagonist nation as the culprit. It gets worse from here.

This is a game for high-powered characters. The author suggests Wonder Woman, Hal Jordan — Green Lantern, Green Arrow, Hawkman, Batman and the Martian Manhunter. This is a good mix. One could assume that this was a Justice League combo. Others like Zatanna, Firestorm, Captain Marvel, Captain Atom (the latter two of which have no published stats) and even the Phantom Stranger (ditto) might be equally useful. If you are using your own DC Heroes characters, or adapting the scenario to another game system, be sure to use heroes of equal measure. **CF**

DARKSEID—
THE WAY KIRBY MEANT HIM TO BE! WITH ENOUGH POWER TO TAKE ON A GOD!

STEVE PERRIN is the creator of the Elfquest RuneQuest and Superworld games along with scores of modules and other related material

FUN & PROFIT

BY MIKE BENTON

A new comic collector was wandering around a comic book store with his girl friend. I watched them closely examining the prices on all the back issues of old and recent comics.

"How do you know what these comics are worth?" the collector asked the store owner. "Where do all these prices come from?"

The store manager pointed to a well-thumbed edition of this year's Comic Book Price Guide. "Some prices come from here," the comic book dealer said, "and the rest of the prices—well," he pointed to his head and smiled, "they come from right here, kid."

"Personally," the collector's girl friend said, "I wouldn't give you more than a quarter for any comic book in the world—they all look the same to me."

To most people and to many comic collectors, comic book prices seem to make little sense. After all, think how hard it is explain to someone why their 1967 issue of **Chip 'n' Dale** *is worth 20* cents *but your 1967 issue of* **Green Lantern** *by Neal Adams is worth 20* dollars. *After all, a comic book is a comic book is a comic book.*

Probably the most mysterious thing about collecting comics is why a comic has the price or collector value it does.

In this column, you will discover what few collectors know:

Where do Comic Book prices come from?

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY MATT HAWES

IN THE BEGINNING...

For the first 25 years of comic book reading and collecting, from 1938 to 1962, comic books had two prices — ten cents *new* and five cents *used*. Coverless comics were two for a nickel, and you could still find Golden Age comics in "Three For A Quarter" bins.

There were no price guides and no national publications that carried advertisements for back issues of comics.

Around 1962 to 1963, a few dealers in science fiction books noticed that they could get a buck or two for certain comics from collectors.

An old gentleman who sold comics by mail during those early years told me how he priced his comics:

"In 1961, I listed a bunch of 1940s Superman and Captain Marvel comics on my old and rare book list for 75 cents each. I sold every one of them. The next time I found a stack of old comics, I asked a dollar each and they still sold. I kept raising my prices and they kept on buying, all through the early 1960s."

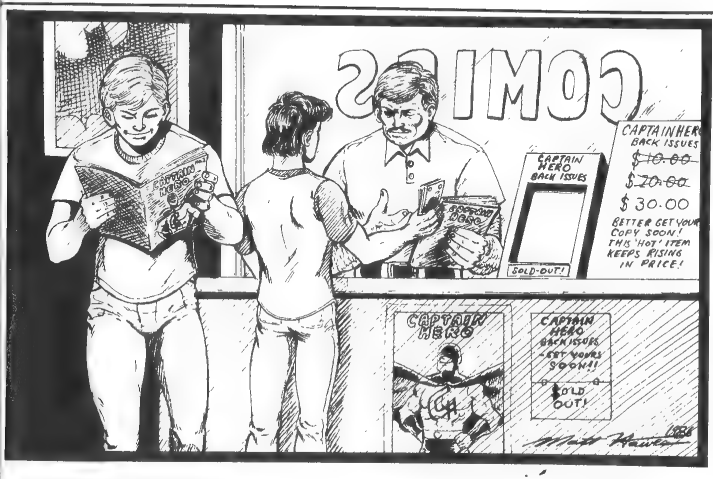
Remember those words — "I raised my prices and they kept on buying" — because you'll hear them again.

In 1964, there were around a dozen people who specialized in selling comic books exclusively. These were the first professional comic book dealers, and they did almost all of their business by mail.

By the mid to late 1960s, there were enough national dealers' sell lists circulating that you could get an idea of what a comic might be worth by averaging those prices together.

I remember sitting around a large table in 1967 with fifteen big-time comic book dealers' lists spread around me, trying to figure out what my first issue of **Uncle Scrooge** might be worth.

In those early days before price guides, it seemed as if dealers were making up prices on the spot — and they usually were.



Will the price go up further?

THE FIRST PRICE GUIDES

About 1970, a few major comic book dealers and collectors decided that comic collecting needed a price guide, just like the coin and stamp collectors had guides for their hobbies.

These early price guides were made up entirely by collecting lists from dealers and looking at the prices in ads from comic fanzines for old comics.

If there wasn't a price available for some of the comics, it was made up or estimated and then included in the guide.

Even today, prices are routinely estimated and guessed for all price guides. Collectors (and dealers!) forget that every price in a price guide is only an estimate, a guide, and a suggestion for what a comic **might** be worth to *some* collector at *some* point in time, *maybe*.

Price guide prices are educated guesses — not unshakable truth.

COMIC CONVENTIONS AND THE NATIONAL MARKET

By 1971 there was an official price guide for comics and a booming national market with regional conventions had emerged around the country.

The convention marketplace in the 1970s was a lot more volatile than the somewhat leisurely mail-order comic market of the 1960s. Prices tended to escalate and jump at the large conventions where deals were being made around the clock.

At an early convention I attended, I watched the prices for EC comics move from an old price of $2 to the new national standard of $6 within the space of a weekend.

Convention dealers discovered that collectors were often willing to pay more for a comic when it was in their hands than for one advertised through the mail.

Prices were soon adjusted on convention floors according to how "bad" a collector might want a book.

The price guides soon started to reflect more and more the "bullish" convention marketplace prices, and the prices of comic books through the 1970s climbed quicker and quicker.

THE COMIC BOOK STORE

In the mid-70s, the direct market or comic book specialty store emerged. Now in addition to mail order dealers and comic conventions, the comic book stores themselves would become a factor in where comic prices came from.

For the most part, comic store owners relied on the **Overstreet Price Guide** to set the prices for many comics in their stores.

For the more recent and hot comics, however, the store owners discovered that they could not depend on a price guide. Prices changed too quickly on recent back issues, and some new comics weren't even listed in the guide.

For the books that sold the quickest, the dealers had to guess what a good price might be — a "good" price in this case is one that is just high enough so that the comic wouldn't sell out immediately, but attractive enough to a serious collector.

If a comic did sell quickly at a certain price, the dealer would raise it until the buying slowed down. In this way, he attempted to make the prices reflect the collector demand in his own shop.

IT'S ALL IN THE MIND

Comic book prices then, whether they are in a price guide or on a bagged comic, all originally come from one place — a dealer's mind.

Every price on a comic is "made up" by a dealer at some time or the other. Even if he does use a price guide to estimate a comic's worth, a dealer must always guess the price he can sell the comic for.

Sometimes, however, dealers guess wrong.

All too often, a "hot" comic may be advertised at some big price, and people automatically believe that the price is accurate.

For some reason, just seeing a comic *advertised*, not sold mind you, but advertised at a certain price gives it instant credibility.

A printed price, no matter where it is printed, has strong power.

"Well, the last issue of **Rabid River Rats** must be worth $10 because somebody was asking that much for it," is the kind of talk I hear too often from collectors — and dealers.

What people forget is that the advertiser who asks $10 for that comic just made up the price — it's not a "real" price until (and unless) somebody pays it.

The price of any collectible, be it comic book or Oriental burial urn, is never real until a collector pays that price.

WHERE PRICES DWELL

And now you're getting an idea of where comic book prices come from — from you, the comic collector!

Every price is only a dealer's guess as to what you might pay for a comic.

If you don't pay it, the dealer guessed wrong and the price changes.

If enough collectors do not buy a comic at a certain price, the price will change until the comic sells.

If you don't like the prices dealers today are asking for comic books, then don't buy.

Just wait — they'll make up a better price.

GET MY TIME MACHINE READY DEPARTMENT

I always like to tell collectors that when I first started ordering back issue comics by mail in 1964, I sent off $1.25 for **Fantastic Four** 1 and 2 (75 cents for the first issue, 50 cents for the second).

In 1966, I wrote my first column on collecting comics and comic book prices. This was just when comic book collecting as a hobby really took off and prices for old comics were going crazy. In my column back then I wrote:

"I have in front of my one dealer's bi-monthly lists for a year and a half period. Here are the prices charged for **Fantastic Four** 1 from early 1965 to mid 1966:

FANTASTIC FOUR 1

— $6.00
—$7.50
— $8.00
— $9.00
— $10.25
— $12.00
— $12.50
— $15.50
— $16.50

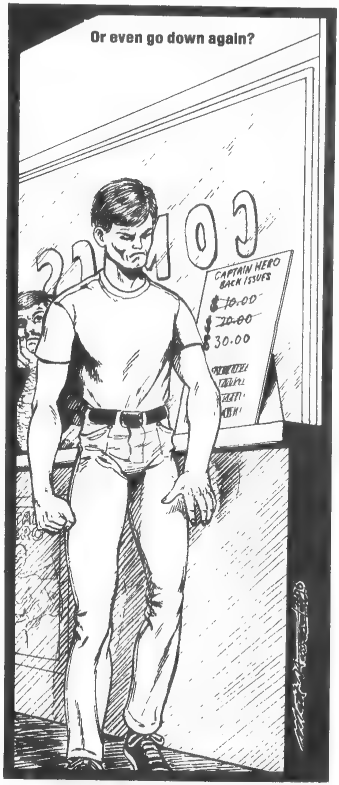
In 18 months, he almost tripled his prices! Such price gouging will wreck our hobby ....etc, etc."

Now that FF 1 *sells* for $500 to $1000, I hereby and publicly forgive this dealer for his early greed.

See ya!

CF

MIKE BENTON is the author of Comic Book Collecting for Fun and Profit and a leading expert on investments in rare comic books



SILVER AGE

BY GERARD JONES

ENDLESS SUMMER

There was a golden time when comic books didn't have to be dark with death and danger lurking around every corner, everyone suspicious of each other and suffering through an angry world.
Instead times could be bright and happy, people could be honest and show integrity, and most importantly, every superhero could easily tell right from wrong, saw his duty clearly and did it!

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DC Comics of the 1960s have taken a lot of heat from both fans and pros over these last fifteen years or so. Most of the criticism focuses on the unreality of their worldview. More appreciative readers are always willing to concede that some of the art — by Carmine Infantino, Joe Kubert, Gil Kane, Murphy Anderson, Curt Swan and others —was beautiful, and that many of the stories by the likes of John Broome, Eando Binder, Gardner Fox, Jerry Siegel and Edmond Hamilton were fun and carefully crafted. But then the praise breaks down. The next comments are usually, "But the heroes were so two-dimensional. The values and ethics were so simplistic. And the world was so unbelievable."

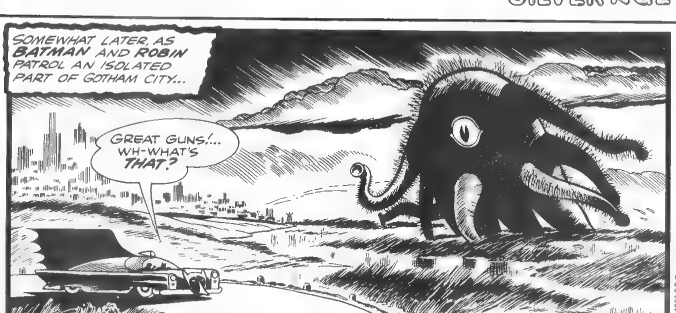
This is a view inspired by the Marvel revolution of the early 1960s, a revolution which has now become orthodoxy. No one now questions the basic tenets: Superheroes should be complex, ambivalent, troubled and not always fond of each other; stories should explore the gray areas of life and morality; the world should be given at least a veneer of grimy, gritty reality.

Jim Shooter recently put the current view of the old DCs very clearly: "Buildings had flat, smooth bottoms back before 1961. No pipes. No wires. No foundations. Occasionally, people who lived in them...were hit by lightning or splashed with chemicals and therefore gained super powers. Immediately, these folks donned costumes and began patrolling the city looking for evildoers...The general populace adored them. Often, the mayor, a plump, non-ethnic type (but of course, there were no ethnic types) would invite one of these...super heroes to cut the ribbon at a bridge opening. No one in attendance...doubted the integrity, the sincerity or the goodness of the super hero. No one even had a difference of opinion as to what 'goodness' was in any situation."

And Shooter's right, at least in factual detail. His criticism certainly has its validity. It's a little bit disturbing that a whole body of children's entertainment in a country as diverse as the United States, a body of entertainment created by men with names like Schwartz and Weisinger and Infantino and Kubert was populated by a homogenous race of Kents, Waynes, Jordans and Allens. Maybe there is something a little spooky about a whole fictional world with scarcely a trace of moral ambivalence.

But nobody every laid down an aesthetic law that said super-hero comics were supposed to reflect social reality. Stan Lee and his cohorts tried to reflect that reality as an experiment, and it caught on, and a young generation of writers and editors seized on it, and now it's the norm. But when you stop and think about it, why should a genre as fanciful and crazy and impossible as superhero comics have to take up the burden of realism?

No one ever demanded that Donald Duck and Uncle Scrooge explore the grimy side of economics in Duckburg. No one would want them to. Would anyone want Little Lulu and her pals to have to grapple in grief and anxiety with the problems of race relations and drug abuse and child ab-


SOMEWHAT LATER, AS BATMAN AND ROBIN PATROL AN ISOLATED PART OF GOTHAM CITY...
GREAT GUNS!... WH-WHAT'S THAT?
Copyright 1986 DC Comics

duction? Of course not. And outside of comics — would any of you want social relevance or moral relativism jammed into the stories of Oz or the Hundred Acre Wood or Never Land?

We all have a need to retreat to that unchanging, closely-bounded, clear-cut world of childhood imaginings. Kids in particular need to escape from the complexities, the contradictions, the terrors of a grown-up world they can't understand. They need a world where clear moral forces — Good and Evil, or Friendly and Mean, or just Happy and Sad — can fight it out according to rules that are always the same, and where the good side can always triumph. It's the basic structure of fairy tales: A good but unreal world is disrupted by something going wrong (the real mother dies and the father marries a wicked woman), the hero or heroine must persevere through greater and greater troubles, and finally the conflict is resolved and everything is perfect. It's even the structure of some of our great literary myths: the quest of the Holy Grail, Milton's combined *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*.

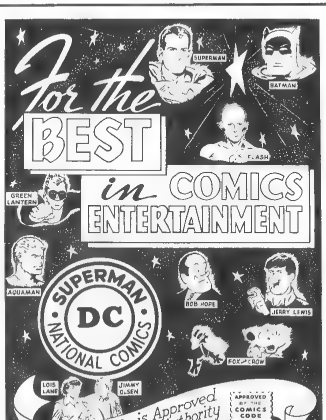
Of course there's a place in art for tragedy. And there's a place for realism and ambivalence. But there's a place for Paradise, too. The DC comics of the Sixties, in their own light-hearted way, were giving kids their own special Paradise. And let me tell you, when I break out some of my old issues of **Flash** and **Superboy** and **Strange Adventures** and read them from that perspective, something truly magic happens.

The wonder of those old DCs, and the thing that makes it so hard for today's comics readers to view them clearly, is that the Paradise was also recognizably our world. It wasn't a fairy land of Emerald Cities or talking ducks. It was a world of cities with skyscrapers, small towns with schools and general stores, a world populated by kids with rolled-up jeans and grown-ups who worked in offices and went to fancy restaurants on dates. It was identifiable as America in the 1960s, although not quite the same America that we had to deal with in our daily lives.

This is what confuses the critics: They see the realistic touches and think that the men at DC were trying to fool us into thinking that this was the real world. They think that Broome and Fox and Siegel were lying to us, or to themselves, about the way things really were. In fact, those writers saw no reason for colorful, super-powered crimefighters to comment on reality at all. If they had, they wouldn't have named the cities Metropolis instead of New York, Central City instead of Kansas City, Coast City instead of Los Angeles. They were pulling off the marvellous trick of giving kids (and wistful adults) a fairy tale Paradise that they could relate to everyday reality.

The DC Paradise wasn't invented out of whole cloth, like Oz, but distilled of all the good things that we really experienced. We all had one or two teachers who really cared about us, we all knew friendly storekeepers and genial folks down the street. We wanted to believe that most people were decent and moral, that a lot of people in government and law enforcement were honest and heroic. We all had a friend or two we could really count on. And we all experienced some of those endless, perfect summer afternoons that never seem to come around once you're an adult.

Well, in the DC Comics, ALL teachers cared, ALL shopkeepers were friendly, ALL the folks down the street were genial. EVERYONE in government and law enforce-



THE TOP TV COMIC STARS COME FROM DC-The House of Hits
POW!
ON ABC TV: BATMAN & ROBIN
IN LIVE ACTION - featuring The JOKER, The PENGUIN and The RIDDLER ... every Wednesday and Thursday!
BIFF!
THE ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN!
IN LIVE ACTION - and IN COLOR! The WORLD'S MOST SUCCESSFUL TV PROGRAM!
KRAK!
ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN, SUPERBOY & KRYPTO
In Animation - and in Color on CBS TV each SATURDAY Morning. Starring in September!
WHAM!
The MAN of STEEL & LOIS LANE Come to Life in...
HAROLD PRINCE
"IT'S A BIRD...IT'S A PLANE...IT'S SUPERMAN"
The NEW BROADWAY MUSICAL HIT!
and coming to the FALL OF '66! AQUAMAN, WONDER WOMAN, The FLASH, PLASTIC MAN, and METAMORPHO in COLORFUL ANIMATION!

ment—most of all the super-heroes—was courageous and impeccably honest. Friends NEVER let you down (although there were plenty of plot twists, especially in the Superman comics, to make you think they had for a few pages).

And in those comics, it was ALWAYS a summer afternoon. The sun shone, the trees were thick with leaves...you could almost smell the richness of the loam when the heroes left the city (especially if the magically evocative Carmine Infantino were drawing the story.) There was unlimited time, time for adventures, for travels, for sharing danger with your pals.

Maybe the greatest comic for building on the stuff of American boyhood in the 1960s was **Strange Adventures.** It began in 1950 as a vehicle for heavy, EC-style science fiction, but during the next decade editor Julius Schwartz molded it more and more around the concerns of childhood and brought it into line with the glowing, utopian vision of the DC superhero world.

John Broome and Gardner Fox wrote enchanted stories for it — Broome's filled with little bits of atmosphere and characterization that almost made you feel the DC world could be real, Fox's stuffed with elements and references that struck a million chords with your own games and daydreams. And the artists. Good lord, those artists. Carmine Infantino was a master at taking the most improbable events and putting them in a context of such palpable, beautifully-observed Americana that you couldn't help believing them. Murphy Anderson made everything so delicate and beautiful; Gil Kane made it dynamic: Mike Sekowsky put such vigor and expression into his people...for the time it took to read those stories, that world became your world.

In **Strange Adventures** 123 (December, 1960), the Schwartz stable pulls off a marvellous twist on **The Prince And The Pauper.** In "Earthboy Meets Spaceboy," an alien youngster who has lived his whole life in a nomadic spaceship touches down briefly on Earth and discovers a human kid

who looks exactly like him. Both boys are bored and discontented with their lives, and they conspire to change places. In the next day or two, each is presented with troubling situations that their elders can't solve; but the spaceboy is able to apply his alien superscience and the earthboy his public-school learning about local flora, and soon all is right with both worlds. Each boy ends up with his sense of worth restored, his love of his daily life rekindled, and each returns happily to his real station.

"Earthboy Meets Spaceboy" is an interesting contrast with its literary original, for where Mark Twain used his switcheroo to make some cutting comments on the evils of the class system in Europe, Gardner Fox uses his to restore a little magic to the routine of modern childhood. The old DC world was full of such infusions of enchantment into humdrum reality.

The Schwartz writers used super heroics, too, to bring that magical dimension into day-to-day life. Despite what critics have said, the old DC heroes did far more than just tangle with colorfully-costumed thieves in repetitive battles of wits and powers. Perhaps my favorite DC story of all is "Snare of the Headline Hunters" from **Flash** Number 126 (February, 1962). There is no finer argument for the purity and enchantment of the DC world-view of the Silver Age than this tour-de-force of character, plot and atmosphere by Broome and Infantino.

The story introduces us to Daphne Dean, a Hollywood starlet who was once Barry (Flash) Allen's childhood sweetheart. At the insistence of her scheming agent, she tries to lure Barry into a new romance as part of a human-interest publicity stunt. The writer and artist weave a spell of poignancy, nostalgia and romance as Daphne and Barry stroll through their old home town, passing the Sweet Shop with the bike propped up against it, the tree-shaded houses with white picket fences, the tree-trunk with their initials carved into it. Barry slips back into a childish dream of rescuing his pigtailed little sweetheart from danger; then, when the dream is oddly paralleled by his real rescue of the adult Daphne, he realizes that the infatuation he feels is really just nostalgia. Daphne, sadly, finds that she has really fallen for the adult Barry Allen.

The approach of Mort Weisinger and his writers on the Superman line of comics was different from Schwartz's. The stories he favored weren't so light-hearted or so sweet. He preferred tales based either on amazing, mind-boggling gimmicks, or on real heart-rending emotions. Yet he was true to the spirit of DC's combined real world/fairy land. Superboy's home town, Smallville, had all the elements of the ideal little American town that has haunted our national daydreams from the stories of Booth Tarkington right down to the speeches of Ronald Reagan.

Overall, the stories in **Superboy** and **Adventure Comics** were probably the weakest produced by the Weisinger stable (if for no other reason, just because the art of John Sikela and George Papp wasn't in the same class as the Swan, Boring and Schaffenberger work that graced the other titles). Yet

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SUPERGIRL
GREAT GUNS! I SEEM TO SEE A YOUNGSTER FLYING, DRESSED IN A SUPER-COSTUME! IT... UH... MUST BE AN ILLUSION!
LOOK AGAIN, SUPERMAN! IT'S ME... SUPERGIRL! AND I'M REAL!

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they work a hypnotic spell on any reader who will surrender to the safe, perfect dreamworld of Smallville.

Nothing ever really changed in Smallville, just as nothing ever really changed in the whole DC world until about 1967. Pete Ross was Clark Kent's friend, so loyal that he was able to keep the secret of Clark's true identity year after year, through every possible challenge and adventure. Lana Lang was out to uncover that secret identity,but you knew she'd always fail; it's been said that that knowledge made the stories predictable, but for a kid it only made them more powerful. We knew that the witches and Nome Kings were never going to destroy the kingdom of Oz. We knew Hansel and Gretel weren't going to be cooked in that oven. For that matter, we knew Clark Gable was going to get Claudette Colbert in *It Happened One Night*, because that's the way it always was in Hollywood Romances. But it didn't matter. Let real life be uncertain and nerve-wracking. We need some fantasy to shore up our hopes that life will eventually prove to be worth living.

And there's no reason that fantasy shouldn't transform its world into an impossibly stable and beautiful place. We might long for the homey security of a general store like the Kents', a place where family, livelihood and community life were joined in warmth and generosity. We might long for parents as patient and forebearing as Jonathan and Martha Kent, whose super-powered child certainly gave them more cause for worry and heartache than we ever did. We might long to live the routine of that little town year after year, on one unending summer afternoon. We'd never get that in real life. If we did, we might find we didn't want it. But there's nothing wrong with yearning for it, and nothing wrong with slipping into it occasionally, for a little while, through the pages of an old DC.

I guess what it all comes down to is this...Jim Shooter was right about the facts. Buildings did have smooth bottoms until Marvel came along. But he was wrong in his judgement. Because those buildings didn't need any pipes or wires or foundations. Those smooth skyscrapers of Metropolis and Central City, those little brick houses of Smallville and Blue Valley, had everything they needed. They had everything WE needed for a perfect fairy tale.

CF

GERARD JONES is the author of The Beaver Papers, The Comic Book Heroes and numerous articles for National Lampoon and TV Guid.

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